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AN APPROACH TO CHAUCER'S CONCEPT OF THE DREAM

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance,  
a thesis entitled "An Approach to Chaucer's Concept of the  
Dream" submitted by Jack Lewis in partial fulfilment of the  
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## ABSTRACT

This study constitutes an exploration of what may be called Chaucer's concept of the dream as it is realized throughout his poems. What I seek is an idea that derives from Chaucer's presentation, that has a unified, though perhaps complex, structure and that concerns the dream in some publicly understood signification of that word. The dream is a rich and problematic subject matter, both in general and for Chaucer. I try to discover what may be learned from Chaucer's critics about the concept I have described; to draw on dream lore and other dream poems for points of illumination concerning Chaucer's practices; and to expose the nature of the problems one meets in dealing with Chaucer's dreams. But always discussion is brought to bear on the guidance Chaucer's poems offer for our consideration of the dream.

I make three probes into areas of initially independent interest concerning the dream. The first chapter concentrates on Chaucer's dream vocabulary, but entails a preliminary examination of dream narratives and prepares for a fuller account of the narratives in Chapter III. I try to discover the limits of usefulness in relating Chaucer's terms to terms in medieval dream typologies, then develop alternative values for the dream vocabulary in the light of the dream as imaginative activity. Finally, I





attempt to uncover the underlying pattern of concern the dream terms reveal in their immediate contexts--that dreams are associated with the question of signification, with experiential qualities and with the act of telling.

Chapter II concentrates on medieval understandings of the dream, both as critics have presented it and as Chaucer views it. I reexamine two crucially important Chaucerian passages on dreams and, in part, use the chapter as a way of building a set of questions appropriate for study of Chaucer's dream narratives. For the rest, I try to discover whether critical findings already available provide a satisfactory account of Chaucer's concept of the dream. I find that at least in certain ways they do not. An approach from the science of dream lore is found to be somewhat inaccurate. Allegorical approaches are seen to be based in part on a questionable understanding of dream lore and to be not fully descriptive of dream uses. An assertion concerning the authenticating function of dreams is seen to need qualification.

The final chapter concentrates on Chaucer's handling of dream incidents and narratives themselves. Implications of the dream as imaginative activity and the pattern of triple interest from the first section and questions arising from the second are brought to bear as I attempt to place the dreams in poetic context. In so far as critics view Chaucer's dreams merely as devices or merely as reflections of what moderns may think of as actual dreaming, their proposals are rejected. I find that the reader is called upon to understand Chaucer's dream narratives as tellings which utilize some reference to dreams of human experience, and I attempt to explicate that finding.





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J. L.





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## INTRODUCTION

Dream is a difficult concept to circumscribe. For the modern reader, the primary signification, no doubt is, intra-psychic experience during sleep. But one may also be aware of such understandings of the dream as an adventure by the soul, as visitation of spirits to the soul, or as divine message. Apart from the experiences of the dreamer one may think of the dream as a metaphor for illusion or for ideals. Qualities of dreaming experience--their vividness, for example, or their mysteriousness--may come to mind, as may the pleasurable wanderings of thought during waking hours. Since dreams are eminently tellable, one may think of the dream as that which is told. I do not attempt to exhaust ways of looking at the dream, but only to indicate what I take to be among the most widespread concepts. The dream in a literary work is additionally complex, since it may call on usual understandings of the dream with varying degrees of forcefulness, moving, theoretically at least, to complete detachment from all standard meanings.<sup>1</sup>

What is Chaucer's concept of the dream? The question is not biographical. My interest is in what play of thought emerges throughout Chaucer's works when the poet considers the dream, as word or as event. From the extensive and diverse critical literature which affects our understanding of the dream in Chaucer, the student may derive certain





significant answers; but he will not, I think, find direct consideration of the question as it is posed here. The critical situation provides, as I will try to show, motive for broader and more intensive study of the guidelines Chaucer's works offer together with indications of limits of such study.

Critics have made diverse contributions to understanding the dream in Chaucer. In general, I think, it can be said that critical studies have directly served interest in dream functions within individual poems,<sup>2</sup> in source materials,<sup>3</sup> in systems of dream lore,<sup>4</sup> in the meaning of specific images within dream narratives,<sup>5</sup> in factual content in and surrounding dreams.<sup>6</sup> Studies specifically of dream visions include these interests and others, such as that in the conventional nature of the dream form,<sup>7</sup> the structural relationship between the narrator-dreamer and his tale,<sup>8</sup> and the integration of the dream with other thematic materials.<sup>9</sup> Existence of the dream visions raises the possibility that one should speak of at least two dream concepts, one for the dream of the dream visions and another for incidental dreams. Such an understanding is latent in several critical positions, though I have not found it overtly expressed. In several cases, critics comment on a general range of dream narratives including both dream visions and incidental dreams, though neither singly nor in combination do they provide an overview of the dreams.<sup>10</sup> In any event, it is in connection with dream visions that





one finds the most direct comments about the nature of the dream in Chaucer.

Primarily through comments on dream visions, critics have exposed as a fundamental issue whether the dream is to be understood as a literary device divorced from its standard significations. And since some of the contentions turn on whether the dream is to be regarded as truthful,<sup>11</sup> they show the necessity for including consideration of dream validity in treatment of Chaucer's concept. Individual critics may, of course, take both factors (the dream as device and the dream as an entity of human experience) into account,<sup>12</sup> but it is possible to indicate major lines along which the issue is drawn. The structural situation within the dream visions may be taken as the sole determinant of the nature of the dream as a device.<sup>13</sup> Further, appeal may be made to the dream as a conventional device suitable for introducing a special subject matter,<sup>14</sup> or, alternatively, as a conventional device suitable for serving certain kinds of intention.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the dream may be understood as somehow like actual dreams of human experience. A basis for claiming that similarity may be sought in one's subjective sense of the dream,<sup>16</sup> in selected historical authorities about the dream,<sup>17</sup> or in appeal to certain modern dream theories.<sup>18</sup>

For a study which wishes to focus attention on Chaucer's own practices, the critical situation poses certain obstacles. A number of explanations of the dream



in Chaucer depend, as we will see, on contexts of understanding established essentially without Chaucer's participation. I do not mean that critics have ignored Chaucer's text, only that they see Chaucer's text in the light of decisions founded on other texts, either of poets or of dream authorities. To the extent that they do so, independent appeal to clues about how to understand dreams in Chaucer's poems will serve neither full refutation nor full confirmation. It may well be the case that certain features of Chaucer's work do not become apparent until one has first examined something else. On the other hand, the task of beginning, as far as possible, with Chaucer's own practices and Chaucer's own guidelines is not one that can be ignored. It is essential to take that perspective into account as well to move toward understanding whatever is characteristic in Chaucer's treatment of the dream. In this study I am interested fundamentally in ways of looking at the dream, both as word and as incident, in so far as what Chaucer says about the dream and how he employs it guide our understanding. The study should be of some help in clarifying the terms in which controversies may profitably be conducted, even when it does not resolve controversies.

For purposes of understanding the dream concept in Chaucer, internal investigation of his work has not, despite numerous contributions, proceeded very far. Few critics have attempted to draw out implications of their findings for the general meaning of the dream in Chaucer. Direct comments and





discussions of dreaming in the poems have received considerable attention, but a minimum understanding of the concept of the dream in Chaucer would seem additionally to require two steps: exploration of Chaucer's dream vocabulary throughout the poems and exploration of all dream narratives, not only individually, but from the standpoint of the whole. As far as I have discovered, neither step has been taken.

Critical studies of the dream are, then, both diverse and contentious. In part, as I have suggested, these factors may be the consequence of inadequate integration of critical theories with Chaucer's practices. But in part, they no doubt reflect complexities and perplexities in Chaucer's handling of the dream. Like other studies, this one will represent a transaction between expectations and what is available in the poems. But focus on the question of Chaucer's concept will at least open the data to additional perspectives.

My procedure will be to make three probes into Chaucer's material. I will examine verbal uses throughout the poems, discussions of dream lore and dream incidents or narratives. Elements of all three topics will be present in each section, but primary emphases will differ. The probes will entail consideration of relevant criticism, including extended treatment of certain positions. Examination of critical proposals will be necessary not only to discover what understandings of the dream in Chaucer have been offered but also to clarify the meaning of the additional





proposals about the dream which emerge from Chaucer's guidelines.



## CHAPTER I

### VOCABULARY STUDY

#### Chaucer's Terms and the Macrobian Pattern

Remarkably little attention has been paid by critics to Chaucer's dream vocabulary. Editors have annotated individual dream terms and Edward C. Ehrensperger, whose study covers the entire range of Middle English literature, has provided some helpful comparative information;<sup>1</sup> but, as far as I am aware, there is only one sustained effort, joined in by several critics, to provide a guide to Chaucer's uses. Beginning with the assumption that Macrobius was the basic source for Chaucer's collection of terms in the prologue to The House of Fame (7-11),<sup>2</sup> the critics agree in seeking correspondences which will explain Chaucer's terms. There is no total agreement on results, and the critics are generally vague about the extent to which they believe correspondences hold throughout Chaucer's poems. The approach implies that Chaucer's concept of the dream is determined to some extent by the Macrobian understanding of dreams and that the dream nouns which Chaucer uses tell the reader what kind of experience is being narrated.<sup>3</sup> For a variety of reasons--because the critics have other purposes than vocabulary study to serve, because their selection of terms is limited, because they do not carry their procedure to its









that Chaucer utilizes all of the terms found in Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, I, iii. Chaucer's "avisoun," Ten Brink tells us, translates Macrobius' visio or ὄραμα and "fantom," φάντασμα or visum. For Macrobius' oraculum or  χρηματισμός, Chaucer uses both "revelacioun" and "oracle," according to Ten Brink's scheme, while "drem" presumably goes with ὄνειρος or somnium and "sweven" with insomnium or ἐνύπνιον.<sup>5</sup> Ten Brink supplies no supporting argument for his findings; he merely declares that Chaucer means to refer to Macrobius and has recapitulated the essential elements of Macrobius' scheme.

Ehrensperger also takes verbal similarity as an adequate basis for relating Chaucer's terms to Macrobius' terms; but he finds different correspondences:

It is not difficult to see how some of these kinds of dreams correspond to those of Chaucer. Oraculum seems to be Chaucer's oracles, fantasma his fantom, and visio and visum probably his revelacioun and avisoun.<sup>6</sup>

For "drem" and "sweven" Ehrensperger finds no distinction in Chaucer's uses, partly on the grounds that only somnium remains for both of Chaucer's terms. But that finding involves an outright misreading of Macrobius which makes it impossible to take Ehrensperger's equations seriously.

"Insomnium is also called fantasma," Ehrensperger states.<sup>7</sup> As we see, however, not insomnium but visum is also called phantasma, leaving insomnium free to correspond either to "drem" or to "sweven."

One merit of Newman's discussion is that it depends





on a pattern of reasoning. Ten Brink made the mistake of regarding Chaucer's terms as independent of each other, Newman says; whereas they are, Newman rightly sees, "three pairs of terms each pair cast in the syntactic pattern of a 'this . . . that' contrast."<sup>8</sup> Newman accepts spelling as a means of identifying Chaucer's "fantome" with Macrobius' phantasma and "oracle" with oraculum, as Ten Brink does. He refers, however, to Macrobius' meanings (a topic it will be necessary to return to) to establish that "the contrast between 'oracle' and 'fantom' is between a dream which is insightful and one which is not."<sup>9</sup> Newman finds a similar contrast for each set of terms, so that he can declare that Chaucer shows "precise awareness of the essential medieval distinction in discussing dreams: do they or do they not convey insight?"<sup>10</sup> For "drem" and "sweven," cognate relationship offers no clue, but Newman accepts Ten Brink's conclusion and buttresses it with argument. In the absence of a cognate, one of his arguments runs, Chaucer would choose "the English word which comes closest, not in form, but in meaning to somnium."<sup>11</sup> Noting that somnium is both general and specific in Macrobius, Newman explains that for Chaucer "drem" was the "word currently used as the general term for sleep experiences."<sup>12</sup>

Macrobius will not do at all, however, as a source for the contrasts "avisioun" and "revelacioun," Newman decides, because revelatio is not a Macrobian term.<sup>13</sup> Newman accepts Macrobius as the source for the "avisions" of 1.48



in The House of Fame,<sup>14</sup> but he wants a source for contrast between the paired terms, "avisioun" and "revelacioun" of lines 7 and 8. He finds what he needs in commentaries on St. Paul (II Corinthians, XII:1-2), a passage made relevant by Chaucer's obvious reference to Paul's vision when The House of Fame narrator exclaims: "Y wot wel y am here;/ But wher in body or in gost/ I not, ywys; but God, thou wost" (980-982). St. Paul speaks of "visions and revelations" (visiones et revelationes), and commentaries permit Newman to conclude: "The distinction is between an experience which is visually clear but conveys no insight to its recipient and a fuller kind of experience which leads to an apprehension of meaning."<sup>15</sup>

Critical comments thus far raise three immediate questions: Do the terms in Chaucer's list correspond at all with terms in Macrobius? If they correspond, in what manner do they do so? If they correspond in the early lines of The House of Fame, do the same terms correspond in the same way throughout Chaucer's poems? A step necessary in answering these questions, and so far untaken, as far as I am aware, is to determine the relationship of Chaucer's terms to dream types throughout his work. For that purpose we need what Ten Brink and even Newman, to a large extent, fail to take into account: an understanding of the meaning of Chaucer's terms compared with the meanings of Macrobius' terms. Mere spelling is not an adequate guide.

It is not an altogether easy matter to follow





Macrobius' intention in concrete cases. Macrobius himself, it seems to me, would have to rely on unspoken decisions to use the scheme consistently. The reasons for the difficulty are both internal and external. Internally, Macrobius does not apply a single principle of classification throughout his scheme (as will be seen in presentation of his typology). For example, in one case, Macrobius directly emphasizes the cause of a dream as a means of identifying it; in another he does not.<sup>16</sup> In one case Macrobius provides specific content which belongs to one dream type; in another case he does not. At the same time prophetically meaningful dreams are rigidly separated by their results from dreams not prophetically meaningful. The consequence is that an individual dream may seem to point in one direction by its cause or its surface quality and another by its result. Externally, a difficulty is that of finding enough information provided about a dream to assign it with certainty to its category. For Chaucer an additional difficulty concerns the ambiguous uses of "drem" and "sweven." Newman tells us that "drem" may be a general term for sleep experiences as well as a designation for a specific type. But for "sweven" as well, some uses clearly refer to sleep experiences in general, while others may be understood as singling out dream types.

Macrobius explains that two dream types are worthless in the sense that they do not refer to the future. One is "in Greek  $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\mu\varsigma$ , in Latin insomnium."<sup>17</sup> Macrobius



provides more clues for identifying it than for any other type. He tells us that causes are "mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future . . . ." <sup>18</sup> He provides a specific example for each vexation:

As examples of the mental variety, we might mention the lover who dreams of possessing his sweetheart or of losing her, or the man who fears the plots or might of an enemy and is confronted with him in his dream or seems to be fleeing him. The physical variety might be illustrated by one who has overindulged in eating or drinking and dreams that he is either choking with food or unburdening himself, or by one who has been suffering from hunger and thirst and dreams that he is craving and searching for food or drink and has found it. Anxiety about the future would cause a man to dream that he is gaining a prominent position or office as he hoped or that he is being deprived of it as he feared. <sup>19</sup>

A final clue is that of the attitude of the dreamer on awakening.

Since these dreams and others like them arise from some condition or circumstance that irritates a man during the day and consequently disturbs him when he falls asleep, they flee when he awakes and vanish into thin air. Thus the name insomnium was given, not because such dreams occur 'in sleep' --in this respect nightmares are like other types--but because they are noteworthy only during their course and afterwards have no importance or meaning. <sup>20</sup>

Concerning phantasma or visum, the other prophetically meaningless type, the dreamer's state of consciousness and surface qualities are given as clues. This type

comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber, in the so-called "first cloud of sleep." In this drowsy condition he thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees specters rushing at him or wandering vaguely about, differing from natural creatures in size and shape, and hosts of diverse things, either delightful or disturbing. <sup>21</sup>

Macrobius adds a subdivision to this type: "To this class belongs the incubus, which, according to popular belief rushes upon people in sleep and presses them with a weight





which they can feel."<sup>22</sup>

By the three worthwhile types, "we are gifted with the powers of divination."<sup>23</sup> Among these the oraculum is characterized by the appearance of a figure of authority and by the supplying of advice: "We call a dream oracular in which a parent, or a pious or revered man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid."<sup>24</sup> Presumably Macrobius wants to distinguish oraculum as clear from somnium which "conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding."<sup>25</sup> Visio, like oraculum, is unambiguous, but it does not include an authority figure or advice. In visio the thing seen "actually comes true."<sup>26</sup> The Latin is somewhat more helpful here: "visio est autem cum id quis videt quod eodem modo quo apparuerat eveniet";<sup>27</sup> literally, when he sees that which eventuates in the same manner in which it appeared. For visio Macrobius provides instances which emphasize the literal quality of that type. "For example, a man dreams of the return of a friend who has been staying in a foreign land, thoughts of whom never enter his mind. He goes out and presently meets his friend and embraces him."<sup>28</sup>

Arguments can be made that each Macrobian type is represented somewhere in Chaucer's dream accounts. Despite that, values attached by critics to the collection of terms in The House of Fame do not guide our way through Chaucer's



vocabulary. If I am right on that point, it would be possible to suppose that Chaucer utilized Macrobian lore without committing himself to the Macrobian system.

Chaucer uses "oracle" only in The House of Fame passage already cited. Perhaps we should conclude that the spelling of the word suggests a link with Macrobius and that the only evidence to confirm or deny that suggestion would be the coherence of the total scheme of correspondence into which "oracle" fits. Something, however, can be learned as well from the absence of "oracle" in other poems if Chaucer had the opportunity to use it but prefers not to. There are such opportunities. For instance, Aeneas tells a story as an excuse for leaving Dido:

"Certes," quod he, "this nyght my faderes gost  
Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,  
And ek Mercurye his message hath presented,  
That nedes to the conquest of Ytyle  
My destine is sone for to sayle . . ."

(The Legend of Good Women, F, 1295-1298).

There we have two authority figures such as Macrobius called for, a parent and "even a god," who indicate what the future will be and what action the dreamer should take. Mercury again appears to the sleeping Arcite in The Knight's Tale, with advice about the future. "Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,/ Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie/ Biforn hym stood . . ." (CT, I, 1384-86). Mercury says, ". . . 'To Atthenes shaltou wende,/ Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende'" (CT, I, 1391-92). In one of Chauntecleer's exempla, an unidentified but authoritative-seeming person warns a



traveler that he will drown if he continues his journey next day. Chauntecleer refers to the event as a "wonder dreem" (CT, VII, 3078), and a skeptic includes it in a general reference as he rejects "dremynges" and "swevenes" (CT, VII, 3090-91). But no one refers to an "oracle" in any of the cases. Nor does Chaucer use the term when he introduces one of the very authoritative figures who made the Dream of Scipio itself oracular. Scipio Africanus appears to the sleeping narrator of The Parliament of Fowls after the latter has read the Dream of Scipio. He does not reveal the future to Chaucer's narrator in the way that he does for Scipio, but he does offer a sort of advice about the future: "And if thow haddest connyng for t'endite,/ I shal the shewe mater of to wryte" (PF, 167-168). But for Chaucer's narrator the dream is nothing other than "sweven." One could argue that individual circumstances prevent the use of the word "oracle"--in one case because the dream is made up, in another because a skeptic is speaking, in a third (PF) because emphasis is on something other than an oracular element. But that same line of argument could be applied to each of Chaucer's dream words, including those which otherwise might seem to support correspondences critics have indicated. Had Chaucer wished to validate his dreams by naming them in accordance with Macrobius' system, he would, I think, have as much reason to use "oracle" in one or another of these instances as to use any of Macrobius' terms for any dream experience.





"Fantom" is used twice outside The House of Fame passage cited. In neither case is it associated with the state of consciousness ("the moment between wakefulness and slumber") or with the specific imagery ("spectres rushing at him or wandering vaguely about . . .") of Macrobius' main description;<sup>29</sup> nor is it associated with the sense of oppressive weight ~~that~~ he specifies for the incubus subcategory. In one of Chaucer's instances, the sleeping narrator of The House of Fame finds himself alone in a waste land outside the rich temple of Venus where he has just witnessed the story of Troy. He prays to be delivered "Fro fantome and illusion" (HF, 493). Walter Clyde Curry refers this instance to Macrobius' phantasma by way of a comment on the role of fumosity in causing the incubus experience. "It may be observed," Curry tells us, "that such a dream is sometimes popularly interpreted in the Middle Ages as the appearance of demons in sleep, hence Chaucer's prayer to be delivered 'From fantom and illusioun' (Fame, 493), i.e., from horrible apparitions which demons show to sleeping men and from the deceptions which they may practise upon the waking mind."<sup>30</sup> But since Curry gives no reason to suppose that the narrator has demons in mind and since Curry fails to comment on the absence of the distinguishing incubus characteristic pointed to above, his proposal does not seem to be carefully considered. The remaining instance of "fantom" in Chaucer points to an alternative way of looking at the passage. Definitely not what Macrobius has in mind



since it concerns a man fully awake, this "fantom" appears in a self-explanatory context as a function of imagination. In The Man of Law's Tale Kyng Alla wonders whether he has seen his long missing wife, but he argues against the possibility with himself: "'Parfay,' thoghte he, 'fantome is in myn heed!/ I oghte deme of skilful juggement,/ That in the salte see my wyf is deed'" (CT, II, 1037-39). In the absence of proper intellectual judgement, fantasy misleads him. Some remarks by St. Thomas indicate a way to link Alla's situation with that of the narrator of The House of Fame without appeal to demons. Amplifying a comment by Aristotle concerning the relation of reason to imagination, St. Thomas explains:

Hence, so long as the intellect is not in command animals are swayed by imagination; some animals because they simply lack intelligence (the beasts), and some in so far as their intellect is veiled (men). And men may be so swayed in three ways: (a) when they fall into some passion, such as anger, desire, fear, etc.; (b) when they are of unsound mind, through delirium or insanity; and (c) when they are asleep and dreaming. In these cases the intellect ceases to control imaginary representations for the truth.<sup>31</sup>

King Alla's situation would seem to be described by (a) or (b), while The House of Fame narrator's has the additional factor of (c).

It is not the mere fact of sleep, however, that classifies the case in The House of Fame with that in The Man of Law's Tale, but the situation in which Chaucer places his narrator that does so. "Phantasms" (phantasmata) mislead us in such a condition as sleep, St. Thomas explains elsewhere, because the intellect is cut off from the senses.<sup>32</sup>





In explaining why the intellect needs the senses, he makes the general point, "But in the present state of life whatever we understand, we know by comparison to natural sensible things."<sup>33</sup> For that reason, "it is not possible for our intellect to form a perfect judgment, while the senses are suspended . . . ."<sup>34</sup> Such thinking, I believe, illuminates the complaint of the narrator in The House of Fame. Having left the temple of Venus with its artistic and literary materials, the dreamer finds himself isolated in a desert, where, he tells us,

Ne no maner creature  
That ys yformed by Nature  
Ne sawgh I, me to rede or wisse  
(HF, 489-91).

The narrator himself is not worried about demons, but about the lack of guidance for his understanding. It is then not a dream type, explained either as resulting from physiological conditions or from demonic influence, that "fantom" seems to point to in this case, but rather a psychological condition.

Though there is no clear evidence that "fantom" is used to name a dream type outside the opening of The House of Fame, there is a dream experience in Chaucer to which Macrobius' term seems applicable. It is that dream or series of dreams which Troilus suffers while trying to endure what Criseyde said would be only a ten days' separation. Chaucer does not say precisely that Troilus is between sleep and waking at the time of the dream, but it would do the text very little violence to understand it that way: "And whan



he fil in any slomberynge,/ Anon [that is, immediately]  
 bygynne he sholde for to grone,/ And dremen . . ." (Troilus  
and Criseyde, V, 246-248). Nor does Chaucer refer precisely  
 to spectres. He does say, though, that Troilus would "dremen  
 of the dredefulleste thynges/ That myghte be . . ." (TC, V,  
 248f.) and he instances changes in scene and the appearance  
 of a large group ("alle/ His enemys," 251f.), so that it  
 seems fair to be reminded of Macrobius' "hosts of diverse  
 thynges . . . disturbing." The term with which Troilus  
 includes a reference to that experience is "dremes" ("now  
 and yore ago," TC, V, 317). Pandarus also presumably includes  
 that dream when, using a term with broad intent to cover  
 dreams and other mental experiences, he complains of Troilus'  
 susceptibility to "fantasie" (TC, V, 329). But the term  
 available from Macrobius is not employed.

"Revelacioun" appears three times outside The House  
of Fame, each time in a context involving "avisioun" as  
 well. Pandarus uses it in trying to demonstrate to Troilus  
 that conflicting claims about dream causes make dreams  
 untrustworthy:

For prestes of the temple tellen this,  
 That dremes ben the revelaciouns  
 Of goddes, and as wel they telle, ywis  
 That they ben infernals illusiouns;  
 And leches seyn, that of complexiouns  
 Proceden they, or fast, or glotonye.  
 Who woot in soth thus what thei signifie?

Ek oother seyn that thorough impressiouns,  
 As if a wight hath faste a thyng in mynde,  
 That therof comen swiche avysiouns . . .  
 (TC, V, 365-74).



Newman's specific contrast for "revelacioun" is not present (the "avysiouns" here are not God-sent), while Ten Brink might want to claim the sense of Macrobius' oraculum. But the main tradition for Pandarus' comments appears to be a different one still. As Richard Hazelton points out, "Pandarus' disquisition on the causes of dreams (Tr.v, 358-378) derives ultimately from the summary of causes given by Gregory the Great in his Dialogorum Libri IV . . . ." <sup>35</sup> Correspondence between Pandarus and Gregory is not perfect. The latter makes no reference to effects of time of the year or of the moon which I omitted in quoting Pandarus. Nor does Gregory refer to complexions; nor, finally, does he grant an independent role to thoughts. But he does include empty and full stomach, diabolical illusions, and divine revelation as causes--enough to suggest that his scheme, however mediated to Chaucer, was drawn upon for Pandarus' speech. <sup>36</sup>

For reasons that will be made clear in a moment, other uses of "revelacioun," both of them in The Summoner's Tale, raise the problem of what to include as the dream in Chaucer. To anticipate the course of this study, understanding Chaucer's concept of the dream requires considering a context of imaginative and visionary apprehensions in general. But that makes boundaries for the dream indistinct. We may perhaps best combine common uses of the word dream with Chaucer's guidance by setting up a series of guideposts. Without denying metaphoric qualities in other instances, I





think of the dream as metaphor in Chaucer in those cases in which a word of the basic dream vocabulary is used in the absence of reference to sleep to suggest comparison rather than an incident or narrative. When the word "slepe" is used to set a time for an event, however vaguely or meagerly the event is narrated, I count the instance as a dream narrative. When words of the basic vocabulary are used with some indication of sleep, there is no difficulty in counting the instance as a dream narrative. There remain, however, cases in which a word of the basic dream vocabulary is used in the absence of clear reference to sleep. In these cases, I think we may say, Chaucer invites or at least allows us to think of the narrations as dreams. For my purposes, at least, these are the boundaries that I have in mind when I seek the concept of Chaucer which governs dreams. Other imaginative and visionary experiences may be thought of as related to dreams and necessary to consider for understanding the dream; but not, for purposes of my study, dreams themselves.

What makes clarification of criteria necessary in this case is that the experience which the Summoner recounts is not said to occur during sleep. In that respect, "revelacioun" here has nothing to do with Ten Brink's position. But Newman, as we have seen, bases his assessment on reactions to St. Paul's vision, which itself was presumably a waking experience. Without discussing the issue, Newman apparently assumes that comments made about a waking vision



may help explicate terms which Chaucer introduces as names for dreams. Whether the Summoner's account may be said to concern an event of sleep is something I will discuss in chapter III. At the moment, it is only necessary to note that, for the reasons given, I would support Newman's general assumption; it is appropriate to suppose that the Summoner's use of terms may tell us something about Chaucer's dream vocabulary whether the Summoner describes a waking or sleeping incident.

The incident in question is that affecting a guileful friar who seeks to ingratiate himself with a grieving mother upon report of her son's death. "'His deeth saugh I by revelacioun,'/ Seide this frere" (CT, III, 1854f.), and adds a comforting conclusion, "I saugh hym born to blisse/ In myn avision, so God me wisse!" (CT, III, 1857f.). Gratefully then, the friar explains that he said a prayer to Christ, "Thankynge hym of his revelacion" (CT, III, 1868). No sharp distinction, such as Newman speaks of, is made between sight and understanding in the passage. But to the extent that there is a difference, the terms occupy the wrong positions for confirming Newman's view. Though the whole incident is referred to as "revelacioun," that term is associated specifically with seeing, while "avisioun" is associated both with seeing and receiving instruction. The only certain meaning for "revelacioun" that emerges from these instances is that it is something which reflects the acts of the gods, not that it is felt as a contrast with "avisioun."





References to Nabugodonosor would have provided Chaucer with opportunity to follow up the distinction Newman finds in The House of Fame. One may add to Newman's citations the discussion by St. Augustine in De Genesi ad Litteram, who is interested in the same point and who specifies that both Nabugodonosor dreams are relevant.<sup>37</sup> Interested in grading prophets, St. Augustine explains that it is better to be able to interpret than merely to see and best to do both: "sicut Daniels excellentia tentata est et probata, qui regi et somnium quid viderat dixit, et quid significaret aperuit" (Dan. II, 27-45, et IV, 16-24).<sup>38</sup> For Daniel images are expressed in his spirit and understanding is revealed in his mind: "Et ipsae quippe imagines corporales in spiritu ejus expressae sunt, et earem intellectus revelatus in mente."<sup>39</sup> But in alluding to Daniel's interpretation of the dream in Daniel IV, Chaucer's Parson is content to omit reference to "revelacioun." He says merely, "This tree [the tree of Penitence] saugh the prophete Daniel in spirit, upon the avysioun of the kyng Nabugodonosor, whan he conseilled hym to do penitence" (CT, X, 125).

For study of the term "avisioun" in itself, the passages reviewed for "revelacioun" indicate something of the variety of uses "avisioun" exhibits. Since the Parson merely alludes to an experience without himself narrating it, nothing definite can be said for purposes here, though one may suppose that the Parson's "avisioun" stands for the Biblical somnium. In The Summoner's Tale, there is no



indication of predictiveness; hence, the type could not be a visio. The friar speaks of an extraordinary perception of an event then taking place. The use of "avisioun" in the Troilus and Criseyde passage will be clarified in another context shortly.

Not only do uses of "avisioun" and "visioun" vary considerably in themselves, but investigation of them is made more complex by a variety of critical claims.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, one appearance of "avisioun" suggests that Chaucer relied on John of Salisbury's version of Macrobius' scheme at least at one point. Commentators regularly note that John reproduces Macrobius' typology, but none that I have read has pointed out that he alters it in a way that is revealing for 1.48 in The House of Fame, "Be avisions, or be figures." In order to see how Salisbury's treatment may aid our understanding, it will be necessary to review conflicting proposals.

Newman's position is very clear and accurate concerning Macrobius. Newman treats the terms, "avisions" and "figures" as:

alternatives . . . drawn from Macrobius who distinguishes (among prophetic dreams) the visio, the dream which forecasts events by allowing the dreamer to see them undistorted in exactly the way they will occur, and the somnium, the dream which conveys its insights figuratively.<sup>41</sup>

B. G. Koonce's position is unclear in that it seems to begin with a mistaken reading and seeks to support it with some weak or misleading assertions. Newman takes it that Koonce derives his idea of Chaucer's "avisioun" from his idea of Macrobius' visio.<sup>42</sup> If Koonce has Macrobius' visio in mind,



his mistaken reading is revealed in the first statement about "avisoun": "The particular genre of allegory to which The House of Fame belongs, the prophetic dream or 'avisoun,' is defined indirectly in the Proem."<sup>42</sup> At another point, commenting on Macrobius' scheme, Koonce explains somnium in the way Macrobius does, but says that visio "reveals truths about the future (for example, Scipio's vision of the afterlife), either with or without a veil."<sup>44</sup> Later, he asserts that "In Book II, Proem, Chaucer explicitly identifies his dream as an 'avisyon' . . . ." and adds that, "Like the dream in the Roman de la Rose, it fits Macrobius's definition of the enigmatic dream (somnium)."<sup>45</sup> Presumably, then, Koonce wants to insist that Chaucer's "avisoun" means something other than what it says, that it fits Macrobius' definition of somnium and that Macrobius' visio may be both veiled like the somnium or unveiled. Since Koonce does not say outright that Chaucer's "avisoun" is the same as Macrobius' visio (although he implies that throughout), we perhaps should not claim that his reading is obviously mistaken until his comment on visio itself. That is to say, it would be possible that Chaucer use the term "avisoun" in the sense of Macrobius' somnium. But the minute Koonce says that visio may be veiled in Macrobius, we must agree with Newman that it "is simply not what Macrobius says . . . ."<sup>46</sup>

A difficulty in following Koonce's intentions is that he weaves together references to Macrobius and references to Biblical passages and other authorities as if what they say





amounts to the same thing with respect to Chaucer's "avisioun." At the outset, he tells us, that Chaucer "follows the example . . . ultimately of Macrobius . . ." in relating dreams to allegory.<sup>47</sup> He adds, however, that "Chaucer's classification also echoes other 'grete clerkys,' who follow Scriptural authority in affirming that some dreams are inspired by God and contain a spiritual meaning which must be discovered beneath a veil of symbols."<sup>48</sup> Thus it is not surprising, but is troublesome, to find Koonce say that Chaucer's "terms 'figures' and 'avisions' (1.48) suggest the Scriptural distinction (for example, Num. 12:6-8) between 'figurative' and 'enigmatic' dreams."<sup>49</sup> Koonce's comment comes toward the end of a footnote to that same Biblical passage which involves him in a treatment of Macrobius' and Chaucer's terms. Evidently, Koonce takes these references as mutually supportive. Unfortunately, his interpretation of the Biblical passage, called upon to mesh with what turns out to be a mistaken reading of Macrobius, is in itself dubious.

"Enigmas," Koonce implies, goes with visions, while "figures" goes with "dreams" in Numbers; and both terms are understood as naming dream types. All of the terms are there, so that understanding may not be impossible, but the point of the Numbers passage seems to be that the direct contact between God and Moses is opposed to the veiled contact between God and others in dreams and visions. Since Koonce cites no commentaries which interpret the Numbers passage in



the way he indicates, his reading seems forced to serve his case for Chaucer. St. Thomas, for instance, treats dream and vision as equally enigmatic when he mentions the Numbers passage in the Summa Theologica. He answers the objection that Christ had no gift of prophecy, since prophecy as Numbers 12:6-8 shows, implies veiled knowledge and Christ's knowledge was clear. The passage, St. Thomas explains, does not show that prophecy is limited to enigmatic knowledge, which belongs to dreams and visions; rather it contrasts that knowledge with the plain prophetic vision of Moses:

Ad primum ergo dicendum quod per illa verba non ostenditur esse de ratione prophetiae aenigmatica cognitio, quae scilicet est per somnium et in visione; sed ostenditur comparatio aliorum prophetarum, qui per somnium et in visione perceperunt divina, ad Moysen, qui palam et non per aenigmata Deum vidit . . . .<sup>50</sup>

The difference between the terms in that passage, Thomas tells us elsewhere, is that in one case one sees imaginary forms "in dormiendo, quod significatur per somnium" and in another "in vigilando, quod significatur per visionem."<sup>51</sup>

A misleading reference to John of Salisbury is also part of Koonce's efforts to make visio stand for something enigmatic. In this case, he tells us that "John of Salisbury groups Scipio's dream with the prophetic visions of John, Daniel, and Ezechiel" (Policraticus, II, 16),<sup>52</sup> thus implying that they are all the same sort of experience. But the point of John's list is to give examples of the differing dream types found in Macrobius. John designates the experience of Africanus as visio, experiences of Daniel and





Ezechiel as oracula, the experiences of Pharaonis and Joseph as somnia.<sup>53</sup> Somehow through all of this, Koonce has failed to single out the passage in John of Salisbury which would give his general treatment of visio some support.

Before I cite that passage, however, there is still another approach to l.48 in The House of Fame which must be considered. Curry severs the terms "avisious" and "figures" by commenting on the second one only. Remarking that "there can be no dream without images or figures or simulacra," Curry tells us: "It is to this necessary characteristic of dreams that Chaucer doubtless refers when he speaks of the future being revealed 'by figures.'"<sup>54</sup> Curry's point, we see, does not concern dream typology, but only the imaginative nature of dreams. In that sense, 'figures' would appear in each type Macrobius names. Since Curry does not mention "avisious" at this point, it is not clear that his comment is responsive to the line at all.

We are now in a position to see how Salisbury's treatment may bring a measure of clarity to the line which some of the critical comments tend to obfuscate. In explaining Macrobius' visio, John adds a subdivision that the source does not have. There is a visio, he says, when the thing he has been talking about (special information) "is imparted directly in a flood of light . . . ." <sup>55</sup> ("Cum uero luce immediata seipsam infundit, uisio est . . . ." <sup>56</sup>) He adds that there is another manifestation of visio when "an admixture of allegory clouds the meaning," as



Joseph B. Pike translates.<sup>57</sup> But while that is the sense of it, Salisbury uses the word figura, not allegoria. Salisbury summarizes, "Porro uisionum alia manifestior est, et quae clara rei occurrit imagine; alia . . . ut cum rem admixta species figurarum obnubilat . . .,"<sup>58</sup> which brings together the terms "visions" and "figures," that we find in Chaucer's line.

If Salisbury is the source for line 48, it explains why Chaucer juxtaposed the terms "avisioun" and "figures" in a way Newman's direct reference to Macrobius does not; it explains how "avisiouns" and "figures" stand in meaningful relationship to each other, as Curry's comment does not; and it offers both support and correction for Koonce's claims. If Salisbury is the source here, then "avisiouns" in l.48 cannot mean something enigmatical, as Koonce would have us believe; "figures" takes care of that, while "avisiouns" refers to what is clear. At the same time it shows that Chaucer could have thought of an enigmatical "avisioun" in some instances, leaving only the question of whether he allowed the term to stand alone in designating visio mixed with figures in some cases.

Evidence for that last point is not certain. By supplementing one dream account with another, it is possible to claim that "avisioun" stands for somnium on one occasion within The House of Fame. Cursing whoever would misinterpret his own dream, the narrator wishes



. . . such a conclusion  
 As had of his avision  
 Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde,  
 That high upon a gebet dyde!  
                                   (HF, L, 103-06).

While no details are provided here, The Monk's Tale includes an account of King Cresus' dream in which surface elements are interpreted symbolically (CT, VII, 2740-55). In the second instance, the experience is called both "drem" and "sweven," but in The House of Fame "avisioun" is left to carry the burden of meaning alone. Chaucer's account (which will be described later on) presumably is based on that of Le Roman de la Rose,<sup>59</sup> which refers to "songe" four times and once to "vision," as something which requires interpretation: "Onc ausi noble vision/ n'ot si vils exposicion."<sup>60</sup> The difficulty does not lie in seeing that "avisioun" designates a dream type Macrobius would call somnium, but in deciding what to make of that fact. We may say that "avisioun" stands for somnium only if we add that it does so in precisely the same sense "drem" and "sweven" and the French "songe" do.

The only other instance in which that question about "avisioun" arises is in the proem to Book II of The House of Fame. Koonce tells us that the Proem "explicitly identifies his dreams as an 'avisyon,' associating it with pagan and Scriptural examples."<sup>61</sup> Since at least some of the examples indicated have symbolic rather than clear statements, that instance may support Koonce's case that "avisioun" stands for somnium. The lines in question, however, are susceptible to more than one understanding.





The narrator tells us:

Now herkeneth, every maner man  
 That Englissh understonde kan,  
 And listeneth of my drem to lere.  
 For now at erste shul ye here  
 So sely an avisyon,  
 That Isaye, ne Scipion,  
 Ne kyng Nabugodonosor,  
 Pharaos, Turnus, ne Elcanor,  
 Ne mette such a drem as this!  
 (HF, II, 509-17).

Whether the narrator's dream is associated with the others is at least ambiguous; he names the other dream to say his dream is not like them.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, it appears that only a predilection for taking the term "avisoun" that way would lead to singling it out as a class name in this passage. Here and elsewhere (as we will see shortly) Chaucer alternates "avisoun" with other dream terms. Sufficient explanation for its appearance here could well be that Chaucer wants to avoid saying "drem" three times in a row and simultaneously wants a rhyme word for one of the names in his list.

Accepting Salisbury as a source for line 48 does not tie the term "avisoun" to clear prediction in every appearance; demonstrably, Chaucer's practice is to use his dream terms in varying senses. But it is possible, again with reference to Salisbury, that the same meaning accounts for "avisoun" when it names the dream of Scipio. The Romaunt of the Rose, The Book of the Duchess and The Nun's Priest's Tale all refer to the "avisoun" of King Scipio. While for Macrobius, Scipio's experience is named a somnium and includes all three specific prophetic types, Salisbury chooses to



refer to it only as visio in the passage cited earlier which gives examples for each meaningful type.<sup>63</sup>

In two instances, if the Macrobian scheme is followed, "vision" or "avisioun" must be understood in the sense of insomnium. In continuing to consider dream causes, some lines after the set of terms Newman refers to, the narrator of The House of Fame wonders whether

The crule lyf unsofte  
Which these ilke lovers leden  
That hopen over-muche or drede  
That purely her impressions  
Causes hem to have visions . . .  
(HF, I, 36-40).<sup>64</sup>

That is the very case Macrobius describes in his first example for insomnium. Pandarus, similarly reviewing dream causes, announces that "oother seyn that through impressiouns,/ As if a wight hath faste a thyng in mynde,/ That thereof comen swiche avysiouns . . ." (TC, V, 372-74). Although the instance is more general, it still points to the mental anxiety that belongs with insomnium. In The Squire's Tale a hint of erotic insomnium is combined with the non-Macrobian factor of magic. A strange knight has brought gifts, including a magic ring and mirror for Canacee, a king's daughter. That night Canacee

Slepte hire firste sleep, and thanne awook.  
For swich a joye she in hir herte took  
Bothe, of hir queynte ryng and hire mirour,  
That twenty tyme she changed hir colour;  
And in hire sleep, right for impressioun  
Of hire mirour, she hadde a visioun  
(CT, V, 367-72).

Curry seems to want to assign a specific role to





"avisoun" as he discusses experiences he believes Macrobius has left out of account. Macrobius includes "nothing to indicate that he is acquainted with dreams called 'infernal illusions' caused by demons," Curry tells us, "or with 'revelaciouns' proceeding from the influence of good spirits, or with that type of waking vision which comes sometimes to saints, called by Chaucer 'avisoun' . . . ." <sup>65</sup> The only instance which could represent what Curry is talking about is that of the guileful friar, pretending to be saint-like, in The Summoner's Tale. But that experience, as we have seen, is referred to both as "avisoun" and as "revelacioun" in Chaucer's text and indeed Curry refers to it that way himself as he discusses it. <sup>66</sup> What then one is to make of Curry's distinction between "revelacioun" and "avisoun" is not made clear. There is no case in Chaucer for a category in which "avisoun" names a waking experience coming to a saint-like creature in such a way as to differ from the "revelacioun" Curry has in mind.

An interesting variation on "vision" is the experience of another friar in The Summoner's Tale. This friar "ravysshed was to helle/ In spirit ones by a visioun . . . ." (CT, III, 1676f.). Pretense is made in the Summoner's telling that the friar's spirit was separated from his body so that he could visit another world. After he learned the fate of friars in hell, "His spirit God restored, of his grace;/ Unto his body agayn, and he awook" (CT, III, 1702f.). The word "awook" may mean that his experience was a dream,



but the word may be used metaphorically for restored to his senses.<sup>67</sup> As a story told about the pilgrim Friar whom the Summoner has in mind, the dream foretells that Friar's future fate. But it falls between Macrobius' visio and somnium types. It is a symbolic statement which is intended to be altogether clear in significance.

Kenelm sees something in an "avisioun," but Chaucer spends much of his dream vocabulary in having Chauntecleer tell about the experience.

Lo, in the lyf of Seint Kenelm I rede,  
 . . . . .  
 . . . how Kenelm mette a thyng.  
 A lite er he was mordred, on a day,  
 His norice hym expowned every deel  
 His sweven, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel  
 For traisoun; but he nas but seven yeer oold,  
 And therefore litel tale hath he toold  
 Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte  
 (CT, VII, 3108-19).

An attempt could be made to relate the experience to Macrobius by seeing more than one component in the dream. Thus, Kenelm would have a clear visio of his murder, together with some veiled details in the somnium. But such speculation is arbitrary in relation to Chaucer's account. A final case in which "avisioun" alternates with "drem" and "sweven" concerns Chauntecleer's own dream and is best discussed in connection with Newman's approach to that event.

It would not be profitable to relate each of the 22 instances of "sweven" and the 63 instances of the noun "drem" to the Macrobian scheme. Some cannot be said to have the function of designating a dream type or a visionary experience



at all. And a number of complexities, applicable to the other terms as well but multiplied for "drem" and "sweven," make it unlikely that a single interpretation would evoke significant consensus. These complexities include the "dramatic" nature of Chaucer's presentation, his penchant for applying more than one term to the same event, the question of how an allusion or brief account in Chaucer is to be related to a fuller account of the same dream elsewhere, and the question of the choice and meaning of oneirocritical sources for which Chaucer's accounts might provide correspondences. There is, moreover, the difficulty of dual possibility that "drem" or "sweven" point either to generic characteristics or to a specific dream type.

In any case we can be sure that each term covers a variety of designations. We have already seen some of these in discussing other terms in The House of Fame prologue. The narrower question of whether "drem" differs significantly from "sweven" must be considered further. Investigating that question will entail a look at some fairly clear-cut uses among the numerous instances of "drem" or "sweven."

For purposes of his study, Newman is interested in The Nun's Priest's Tale as a source of additional support for the claim that "drem" goes with Macrobius' somnium and "sweven" with insomnium. The only passage outside The House of Fame in which Chaucer juxtaposes the terms is in Chauntecleer's line ending his dispute with Pertelote, "That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem" (CT, VII, 3171). Newman





believes that it offers "a contrast of meanings that is consistent with Ten Brink's hypothesis."<sup>68</sup> Newman's supporting argument is succinct enough to quote in full:

In the speeches that run from NPT 2888-3170, Chauntecleer himself uses the word drem (in one form or another) 21 times and sweven only 3 times (and one of these uses is not his own but a quote from a skeptic about dreams). Pertelote, on the other hand, uses sweven 3 times and drem 4 times, two of which latter uses are not her own choice but translations of Cato's "Somnia ne cures."<sup>69</sup>

If we grant that Chauntecleer is contrasting dream types, Newman concludes, "Dreme would then signify prophetically meaningful dreams" that Chauntecleer favors and "sweven meaningless products of bodily disturbances or imbalances" that Pertelote insists dreams are.<sup>70</sup> Nor is Newman alone in his conclusion. John Matthews Manly quotes Macrobius' scheme and comments: "Pertelote obviously classifies her husband's dream as insomnium (or sweven) . . . ."<sup>71</sup>

Now it is true that Chauntecleer and Pertelote differ about the value of dreams. It is true that as far as Pertelote is concerned Chauntecleer's sleep experience was determined by physiological disturbance and is therefore worthless. It is even true that Chauntecleer uses the word "drem" 21 times and "sweven" only 3 times. What is not true is that the word "drem" is reserved in The Nun's Priest's Tale for a specific sleep experience which is prophetically meaningful or that the word "sweven" is reserved for a specific dream type that is prophetically meaningless. Further it is not true that "drem" and "sweven" are used in ways consistent with Ten Brink's hypothesis even to the



extent that they represent, respectively, meaningful and unmeaningful dreams. Finally, it is not true that because Pertelote classifies Chauntecleer's dream as an insomnium she classifies it as "sweven."

The scheme proposed breaks down at the most decisive points. When Pertelote is discussing sleep experience in general, she uses the word "sweven" (in one form or another) in a way which demeans dreams. The following lines all suggest that Pertelote has dreaming in general in mind (that is, for her all dreams have physiological causes):

Allas! and konne ye been agast of swevenys?  
 Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is.  
 Swevenes engendren of replecciouns . . .  
 (CT, VII, 2921-23).

But when she diagnoses Chauntecleer's specific experience she uses for that purpose "dreem":

Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght,  
 Cometh of the greet superfluytee  
 Of youre rede colera, pardee . . .  
 (CT, VII, 2926-28).

Similarly, when Chauntecleer reviews various famous instances of sleep experiences, he speaks mostly of "dremes." But when he refers to his own experience, he calls it "sweven": "'Now God,' quod he, 'my swevene recche aright . . .'" (CT, VII, 2896). Alternatively, Chauntecleer calls his own sleep experience an "avisioun": "'Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,/ That I shal han of this avisioun/ Adversitee . . .'" (CT, VII, 3151-53).

Some ad hoc assumptions might save Newman's proposal--for instance, that Chaucer or the Nun's Priest is having a



joke at the expense of Chauntecleer and Pertelote by having them misuse well established terms when they speak of his own dream; or that Chauntecleer did not recognize the difference between "drem" and "sweven" at the outset, but that he figured out the difference in time to make his concluding reference reflect the pattern Newman proposes. It is also possible, and nothing on the face of it makes it absurd, that Newman has the right scheme, but that he has transposed the terms--"sweven" may mean a meaningful type and "drem" a meaningless type. As we have seen in another case, Koonce is willing to take "sweven" as meaning an enigmatic prophetically meaningful type for The Book of the Duchess. And J. A. W. Bennett takes it for granted that "sweven" translates Macrobius' somnium in The Parliament of Fowls.<sup>72</sup> But to make that proposal, or the others, work for this case two arguments would have to be maintained that I find no way to support. The first is that a way can be found to be sure when "sweven" or "drem" is intended to designate a specific dream type rather than dreams in general. That would make it at least possible to find that some instances can be explained away as not relevant to the specific meanings and to examine in isolation those remaining. The other argument is that there are enough instances used consistently so that a specific usage is established.

If the evidence of Pertelote's and Chauntecleer's designation of Chauntecleer's experience stood alone, as against the statistics Newman cites, it would still make his





argument doubtful. But it does not stand alone. Newman attempts to explain away two of Pertelote's uses of "drem" as being "not of her own choice," as we have seen, "but translations of Cato's 'Somnia ne cures.'"<sup>73</sup> In order to give an example of Macrobius' insomnium John of Salisbury quotes the same Cato line, completing the distich: "Somnia ne cures, nam mens humana, quod optat,/ Dum vigilat, sperat, sperat, per somnum [sic] cernit id ipsum."<sup>74</sup> Forced translation of somnium as "drem" cannot be the case, however, or Newman would not need to argue about whether Chaucer chose "sweven" or "drem" to translate Macrobius' somnium.<sup>75</sup> It would appear that application of "drem" to Cato's somnium simply violates the pattern Newman wishes to find. While one of Chauntecleer's uses of "sweven" is attributed to the skeptic, four of Chauntecleer's uses of "drem" (Newman includes both substantive and verbal forms in his counting) are attributable to the same speaker. Newman may wish to say that none of them represent what Chauntecleer thinks about dreams,<sup>76</sup> but they are important in establishing whether a pattern is present within the poem against which to judge Chauntecleer's line defying "sweven" and "drem." For the skeptic at least, there is no such pattern; he uses both terms in precisely the same sense. "'I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,'" the skeptic explains, "'For swevenes been but vanytees and japes'" (CT, VII, 3091f.). When Chauntecleer tells of Kenelm, he quotes no one else. There we find "sweven" used precisely at the point at which the dream is treated as significant: "His norice hym expowned every deel/ His sweven . . ." (CT, VII,



3116). If "drem" differs in meaning in that account, it does so by reflecting the attitude of Kenelm who finds dreams worthless: "And therfore litel tale hath he toold/ Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte" (CT, VII, 3118f.).<sup>77</sup>

Instances cited so far demonstrate that "drem" is not ranged with meaningful experiences against "sweven" with worthless ones. But showing that "drem" sometimes is associated with a meaningful experience need not produce evidence that is "consistent with Ten Brink's hypothesis." Ten Brink says that "drem" is the equivalent specifically of somnium. If we broaden that claim so that "drem" is the equivalent of any of the three meaningful types, Ten Brink's scheme has no coherence. What we find, if we count as Newman does, is that of Chaucer's 21 uses of "drem," at least 13 are included in commenting on and recounting two experiences which have no enigmatic element relating them to somnium.<sup>78</sup> I refer to the first two exempla recounted at length. In the first, a man dreams successively that his traveling companion calls on him for aid to prevent murder and that the companion or his spirit announces that he is slain and directs the dreamer how to find his body. "And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe," says Chaucer (CT, VII, 3024), relating then how matters appear just as the dreams had said. In the second, a man dreams that a stranger to him warns that a trip next day will mean drowning at sea. The dreamer remains, but a friend to whom he tells his dream departs and is drowned with a sinking ship. If



these two incidents are related to Macrobius' scheme at all, they must be called visio or oraculum, since they announce matters just as they occur.<sup>79</sup> All 13 instances then, either because they are used to say dreams are worthless, or because they are used to indicate types other than somnium are contrary to Ten Brink's hypothesis.

Chauntecleer's dream itself is a visio, if we connect it with Macrobian types. He sees a creature that tries to capture and kill him in his dream; later a creature of that description, the fox, tries to capture and kill him. The Nun's Priest refers to the experience several times calling it only "drem." For the Nun's Priest then, "drem" is a suitable word for a meaningful, but unenigmatic experience, if we restrict our attention to Macrobian types.

It seems necessary to conclude that Newman's proposal cannot be supported by evidence from The Nun's Priest's Tale. Nor can it be supported in general throughout the works. In addition to allusions already made, conflation of "sweven" with "drem" in the Monk's account of Cresus' experience should be noted. "And eek a sweven upon a nyght he mette," the Monk explains, "Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn/ That in vengeance he al his herte sette" (CT, VII, 2740-42). The surface content has Cresus in a tree, being washed by Jupiter and provided with a towel for drying by Phoebus. Far from indicating the elevation Cresus has in mind, however, the experience points to the gallows for Cresus, the snow and rain of Jupiter and the drying rays of Phoebus acting





on his corpse. So says Cresus' daughter who "his dreem bigan right thus expounde" (CT, VII, 2750). Of Macrobius' types such veiled content must be somnium.

Within The Book of the Duchess "sweven" is the only term applied in Chaucer's retelling of the story of Alcyone whose husband is missing. Alcyone prays for aid to June:

Send me grace to slepe, and mete  
In my slep som certeyn sweven  
Wherthrough that I may knowen even  
Whether my lord be quyk or ded  
(BD, 118-21).

The response has no obscure element of the somnium, but is not a meaningless insomnium either. Macrobius would have to classify it as visio or oraculum, since Morpheus, entering the body of her dead husband, causes it to appear with truthful information and advice:

"Awake! let be your sorwful lyf!  
For in your sorwe there lyth no red.  
For, certes, swete, I nam but ded;  
Ye shul me never on lyve yse . . ."  
(BD, 202-205).

As to "drem" when it is the sole designation, a clear case of physiological disturbance is mentioned in The Squire's Tale. Referring to the king and courtiers asleep after a heavy meal, the Squire states: "Hire dremes shul nat now been toold for me;/ Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,/ That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge" (CT, V, 357-59). It is then closest in Macrobius to one of his insomnium categories, or to the phantasm, if we follow Curry's view cited earlier concerning fumosity in sleep (see discussion on pp. 17f.). The most extensive parallel



to a Macrobian dream type appears in that section of The Romaunt of the Rose (2553ff.), which generally is not attributed to Chaucer. It contains each feature of an erotic dream, including the reason Macrobius assigns for naming the type insomnium, for the dreamer exclaims:

Dere God, what thing is this?  
 My drem is turned all amys,  
 Which was full swete and apparent;  
 But now I wake, it is al shent!  
 (RR, 2581-84).

Though not by Chaucer, the incident offers further evidence that "sweven" need not be used for material describable by Macrobius' insomnium.

A final case I wish to consider in connection with Macrobius is that of the dream of Dido in The Legend of Good Women. Enamoured of Aeneas through seeing his image in his son, Dido dreams of him. Awakening she speaks thus:

Now, dere sister myn, what may it be  
 That me agasteth in my drem . . .  
 This newe Troyan is so in my thought  
 (LGW, F, 1170-72).

To illustrate the insomnium, Macrobius and John of Salisbury following him quote lines from Virgil's account (which presumably is Chaucer's source) including "Anna soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent?"<sup>80</sup> There can be no doubt in this case that, if Chaucer wished to govern his terms by the Macrobian scheme, he should have written "sweven" here; in fact, he has "drem."

Reviewing the evidence we see that any term Chaucer uses more than once is likely to have more than one meaning



in so far as it designates events. Some of these uses can be related readily to Macrobius' scheme, whether the scheme is presented by Macrobius or mediated by Salisbury. Some cannot be related to Macrobius at all and some can be related to Macrobius only against a certain amount of resistance. When terms are related to the Macrobian scheme, they do not consistently follow any pattern of correspondences which critics propose for the set of terms in The House of Fame. "Oracle" is used only in The House of Fame passage and is not attached to oracular dream incidents; "fantom" is probably best understood apart from Macrobius' dream types altogether; "revelacioun" is used for dreams having a god as source, but is neither firmly attached to oracular dream incidents, as Ten Brink would have it, nor is contrasted with "avisoun" in the way Newman proposes. "Avisoun" shows a range of applications, including that to the proposed visio, but including as well other uses not proposed either by Newman or by Curry or Koonce. "Sweven" and "drem" are attached to a variety of dream types and at times are used interchangeably with each other and with "avisoun."

One could nevertheless maintain that at the time he wrote the prologue to The House of Fame Chaucer had Macrobius' scheme in mind and meant to refer to it in the way that one or another of the critics proposes. In that case, we must follow Newman's proposal since it entails no apparent misreading of Macrobius and since it offers a meaningful comment on The House of Fame passage:





While the narrator, Geffrey, seems to be spilling out a confused jumble of synonyms that can mean nothing in particular to him, the poet Chaucer, is displaying his precise awareness of the essential distinction in discussing dreams: do they or do they not convey insight?<sup>81</sup>

Even so, it may be preferable to redefine "drem" and "sweven." In the absence of support for Newman's reading elsewhere in Chaucer's works, the only argument favoring the association of "drem" with somnium is that "drem" was more frequently used in Chaucer's day than "sweven." But, following Newman's reading, we see that the meaningful dream type is the second in each pair in Chaucer's lines, except for "drem" and "sweven." Since "sweven" still could be associated with somnium types and since Chaucer did on occasion so employ it, if there is reference to Macrobius at all, I would think that the immediate rhetorical pattern would outweigh consideration of general frequency of usage, making "drem" suggest the worthless and "sweven" the worthwhile dream.

By narrowing Newman's proposal to cover only The House of Fame passage and by adjusting terms within it, we reach, I think one viable position. There remains, however, an alternative. None of the evidence that I have seen makes it necessary that the set of terms in The House of Fame refer to Macrobius in a serious way at all. Newman himself reduces Chaucer's indebtedness to Macrobius from six terms to four, and no one so far has successfully related all six terms to the Macrobian scheme. As we have seen, Chaucer does not rely elsewhere on the meanings Macrobius' scheme would yield to his terms. It seems at least possible



then that Chaucer did not mean to fix his terms by Macrobian meanings in this case. He may instead have sought a group of terms that could suggest simply that dreams vary. For that purpose he could have borrowed "fantom" and "oracle" from Macrobius or from other sources.

To accept this alternative we would have to give up claim to the precision that Newman calls for. Whether to do so involves partly one's general assessment of Chaucer's relation to the dream lore of his time, a topic to which I will return in considering Curry's position. But there is some evidence immediately at hand. We have only to look at the first three lines of The House of Fame to see that the narrator treats "drem" and "sweven" as synonymous:

God turne us every drem to goode!  
For hyt is wonder, be the roode,  
To my wyt, what causeth swevenes . . . .

That suggests that Chaucer permitted a bit of real confusion for his narrator--that is, an excess of distinctions in the case of "drem" versus "sweven." Juxtaposition of the same terms in The Nun's Priest's Tale could be explained similarly. Noticing at the end of their discussion, not that "drem" belongs with somnium and "sweven" with insomnium, but merely that he had called his dream one thing and Pertelote has called it another, Chauntecleer defies both in a final pedantic flourish.

However that case may be, it seems necessary to conclude that Chaucer's vocabulary is not determined by Macrobius' scheme or by supplementary sources critics have



suggested. Indeed, the range of applications of Chaucer's terms among differing sorts of dream narratives makes it improbable that appeal to any single system of correspondence would yield firm data about differences among Chaucer's terms. That finding is consistent with Ehrensperger's impression based on a survey of all uses of dream terms in Old and Middle English. He states, for example: "Whether any attempt was made in the Romances to distinguish among the various dream nouns and verbs is not apparent,"<sup>82</sup> and declares, "Just as in Chaucer, so in Gower no effort is made to distinguish among the various dream nouns and verbs."<sup>83</sup> The method Ehrensperger employs is the simple one of noting whether different dream terms are used to designate the same event. In that way he finds that "dreme, sweven, and vision were all used synonymously," in the medieval romances,<sup>84</sup> and after citing a number of instances declares: "These examples could be multiplied at great length, but not a single instance serves to show the least distinction among these dream nouns."<sup>85</sup> His procedure is the same for verbs as well each time he remarks on the possibility of distinctions among the terms. While Ehrensperger does not relate the terminology to the nature of the dream experience (as I have done for Chaucer), his procedure is sufficient to establish a prima facie case for the synonymous use of dream terms. The separation of terms in The House of Fame is unusual in English literature. There are no grounds then for leaping (as critics incline to do especially with the word "vision"





or "avisioun" but sometimes for "drem" and "sweven" as well) from the dream term to an understanding of the nature of the dream experience.<sup>86</sup>

In so far as findings have been negative there are, I believe, important positive implications. Whether Chaucer planned it that way or not, an effect of absence of correspondences to a fixed scheme of meanings is that his terms retain a certain openness. If one could count on every "sweven" to be worthless and every "drem" to be meaningful, a large element of reaction, both for characters, narrators and readers would be determined in advance. Tension between the insightful and the illusory would be drained from the events they designate. Further, if Macrobius' scheme were the standard, interest would be fixated on prediction. Further discussion will attempt to demonstrate that the dream for Chaucer is both richer and riskier than reference to Macrobius would suggest.

Findings can be interpreted positively in other respects. The question of what Chaucer means when he writes "drem" or some synonym or related term is partly answered, for substantive forms. That is to say, the words point to events of some sort, and at least some of those events resemble actual dreams which Macrobius' scheme was meant to classify (though apart from his names for them). It must be said, however, that the question of whether the Macrobian scheme is useful for evaluating those incidents remains open until further studies of dream lore and poetic structures



can be undertaken. The description of an incident as an insomnium, for instance, is one thing; the evaluation of that same incident as worthless and the Chaucerian terminology for the incident are different matters. Indications have also been given that Chaucer's language is richer in dream terminology than his sources, suggesting that part of what is involved in Chaucer's hinting at distinctions between "drem" and "sweven" and in interchanging two or three dream terms in describing a single event may well be expression of a certain playful pleasure at having the words available.

It may be added that discussion of correspondences has underlined a point relevant for the entire study of the dream in Chaucer: the subject matter is complex; misunderstanding is hard to avoid. In bringing together a variety of critical proposals and extending the coverage of Chaucer's poems, I have attempted to set forth some of the evidence and some of the considerations which are necessary to take actively into account in coping with Chaucer's treatment of the dream. There are, as far as I have been able to discover, few easy assertions to make about the dream in Chaucer.

#### Chaucer's Terms among Themselves

If Chaucer's terms do not show that his concept of the dream is entirely determined by Macrobius' or other specific external schemes, perhaps something more may be learned by turning to internal relationships among Chaucer's words. Apart from schemes of correspondence, do Chaucer's



dream words present to us blank faces, or do they reveal something of his underlying concept of the dream? Metaphoric uses can be expected to tell us something, but, apart from metaphors, verbs may also do more than tautologically announce that a dream is taking place. For light on Chaucer's uses in general, I want to follow clues from verbal associates that Chaucer places in immediate contexts with dream words, beginning with the pair "imaginacioun" and "fantasie."

Of words which appear in the same line with words of dream vocabulary, "imaginacioun" and "fantasie" lead to considerations which underlie the general range of associations provided for dream terms. For that reason, and because critics have said next to nothing about the relationship of imagination to Chaucer's dreams, I want to examine the topic in some detail. To regard the dream in Chaucer as an imaginative act would seem to be one of the necessary perspectives, in ways which I will attempt to demonstrate.

In a modern study, E. J. Furlong states: "Dreaming, common usage suggests, may be treated as a species of imagining."<sup>87</sup> Concepts of the dream and imagination have changed, but for the thinking of the Middle Ages, such a relationship between them is not an entirely alien concept. In distinguishing dreams from certain forms of vision, Newman, who has made a very extensive study of dream literature, asserts: "If there is a single point about which medieval





speculation on dreams is unanimous, it is that in dreams we see, not actual bodies, nor pure ideas, but images."<sup>88</sup> Curry believes that the medieval definition of a dream is "a sleep-experience caused by a disturbance in the imagination . . . ."<sup>89</sup> Still, if we wish to say that the dream is an act of the imagination for the Middle Ages, a number of qualifications need to be considered.

Perhaps one can abstract the most basic features of imagination or phantasy (using the terms synonymously for the moment) from Murray Bundy's study by relating it to sensation, reason and emotion and conation among activities of the soul.<sup>90</sup> Imagination could be thought of as following the movements of sensation, or as altering sense data by such means as subtraction and combination of images. With respect to reason, imagination could be understood as a servant of thought processes, or as a threat to truthful rationality. It could reflect emotional or conative needs or stir up passions. Similarly, for relationships with powers outside the soul, imagination could be viewed in differing ways: as an obstacle to spiritual insight, or as a factor peculiarly susceptible to spiritual insight. In one capacity imagination was understood as a means of apprehension, in another as a means of giving expression in sensible terms to what was apprehended. As to the terms "imaginacioun" and "fantasie," they could be used interchangeably, or could be distinguished. The favorite contrast, it seems, associated "imaginacioun" with the relatively objective, and the



trustworthy against the more subjective, lively and dangerous "free play" of "fantasie."<sup>91</sup>

There is, one may surmise, no single way of looking at imagination and hence no single way of relating it to dreams. If one thinks of the imagination as producing sense images in the absence of sense objects, then one may define the dream as mental pictures. That definition creates a difficulty, however, since other processes may operate during sleep. Saint Thomas provides a helpful summary of sleep experiences, based on the assumption that they are influenced by "evaporations" arising from digestion:

For when the amount is considerable, not only are the senses suspended, but also the imagination (imaginatio), so that there are no phantasms (phantasmata); thus does it happen, especially when a man falls asleep after eating and drinking copiously. If, however, the evaporation be somewhat less, phantasms appear, but distorted and without sequence; thus it happens in a case of fever. And if the evaporation be still more attenuated, the phantasms will have a certain sequence: thus especially does it happen towards the end of sleep, in sober men and those who are gifted with a strong imagination. If the evaporation be very slight, not only does the imagination retain its freedom, but also the common sense (sensus communis) is partly freed; so that sometimes while asleep a man may judge that what he sees is a dream (somnia), discerning, as it were, between things and their images (similitudines). Nevertheless, the common sense remains partly suspended; and therefore, although it discriminates some images from the reality, yet is it always deceived in some particular.<sup>92</sup>

In this case, St. Thomas takes the option of restricting "dream" to the images themselves. Aristotle, similarly, speaks of the dream ( $\epsilon\rho\acute{\nu}\tau\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ ) as a mental picture ( $\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\mu\alpha$ ) at one point in his essay "On Dreams."<sup>93</sup> But at another, he seems to equivocate on the word, saying that "in a dream we have some other concept, just as if we



perceived something while awake; for we often have some thoughts about what we perceive."<sup>94</sup> It seems that when one defines imagination as the image producing power, by dream one may mean only mental pictures or general psychic activity during sleep.

But imagination need not be thought of as consisting merely of production of sense images. Harry Austyn Wolfson found that imagination shifted from role to role throughout the range of the internal senses (operating between sensation and pure rationality). The following is Wolfson's summary of possible internal senses:

(1) common sense (sensus communis) is the center at which all the senses converge; it distinguishes between the qualities of the different senses; it adds the element of consciousness to sensation; but while it receives all the impressions of the senses, it does not retain them. (2) Retentive imagination retains the impressions of the sensible objects received by common sense after the objects have disappeared. (3) Compositive animal and (4) compositive human imagination consists in the construction of new unreal images out of real images. (5) Estimation perceives the insensible forms connected with sensible objects and knows what is to be pursued and what is to be avoided. (6) Memory retains the forms of estimation just as retentive imagination retains the forms of sensible objects. (7) Recollection is the restoration of something to memory after it has been forgotten.<sup>95</sup>

"Imaginacioun" or "fantasie" was the name given in one system of thought or another for the action of the sensus communis and other thought processes described.

In attributing the dream to imaginative activity, then, one may mean to refer to the imaging of sense data such as experienced in daily life, to alterations performed on images of such data and to various thought processes





attending such data. Further, it may be misleading even for cases in which such processes occur, to speak of the dream as an act of imagination, as if that implied imaginative dominance. In some cases, the dream is understood as important in allowing the imagination to react receptively to higher powers. Averroes, for instance, tells us that "the imaginative faculty of the soul during sleep will be more perfect and more spiritual, for the soul during sleep will have rendered idle the external senses and their organs and will have withdrawn from them to the inner sense."<sup>96</sup> In that condition, the imagination is especially susceptible to influence of the Active Intellect, understood as an emanation of God, which "endows the imaginative soul with the universal nature that the individual that comes into being possesses" while the imagination "will receive it as a particular by virtue of the fact that it is matter."<sup>97</sup> F. Rahman develops a view of a similar attitude by Alfarabi and Avicenna when he discusses the role of imagination in "figuration of religious intellectual truth." A passage is worth quoting for its general bearing on imagination, though not every writer shared the exalted view of imagination of which Rahman speaks:

Now imagination must necessarily express this truth in figurative language, since, not being an immaterial faculty, it cannot grasp the universal and the immaterial. But imagination cannot always perform this function because in ordinary waking life it is engaged as an intermediary between the perceptual and the intellectual faculties: it receives sensual images from the former, acts upon them by division and combination, and places them at the service of the mind for practical needs of life. When,



however, in sleep, the soul withdraws from the sensible world and no longer performs this function for the mind, it assumes its proper function freely.<sup>98</sup>

Even though imagination is seen as passive before higher powers in the Arabian philosophies mentioned, the importance of its contribution is emphasized. Thus prophetic experience comes to men of strong imagination. Averroes says: "Some persons have truer dreams and can see them more frequently than others during sleep because of their superiority in this faculty, that is, in the faculty of imagination . . . ."<sup>99</sup> In some other accounts of dreaming, the role of imagination is de-emphasized. Some of Plato's views help clarify what is meant. The Sophist refers to phantasmata "which spring up of themselves in sleep or by day, such as a shadow when darkness arises in a fire, or the reflection which is produced when the light in bright and smooth objects meets on their surface with an external light, and creates a perception of the opposite of our ordinary sight."<sup>100</sup> But, as Bundy points out, "this creation of phantasms is an activity of God, not of man."<sup>101</sup> In Republic IX, Plato distinguishes two kinds of dreams. In one appetites are dominant and "the wild beast within us, gorged with meat and drink, starts up and having shaken off sleep, goes forth to satisfy his desires."<sup>102</sup> In the other, rationality dominates:

But when a man's pulse is healthy and temperate, and when before going to sleep he has awakened his rational powers, and fed them on noble thoughts and enquiries, collecting himself in meditation; after having first indulged his appetites neither too much nor too little, but just enough



to lay them to sleep, and prevent them and their enjoyments and pains from interfering with the higher principle--which he leaves in the solitude of pure abstraction, free to contemplate and aspire to the knowledge of the unknown, whether in past, present, or future: when again he has allied the passionate element . . . I say, when, after pacifying the two irrational principles, he rouses up the third, which is reason, before he takes his rest, then, as you know he attains truth most nearly, and is least likely to be the sport of fantastic and lawless visions.<sup>103</sup>

Nemesius comments that the faculty of intellect "divines the future for us through dreams . . . ." <sup>104</sup> To explain his comments, editor William Telfer remarks:

Remembered dreams (like yawning) are an accompaniment of waking, when the soul is putting on its fleshly harness again. They consist of trains of images constructed by the same brain-processes that serve discursive thought. If one can interpret these images, Nemesius seems to think, they contain knowledge which the soul has had in the timeless and intelligible world that is its true home. Thus, in dreams, it is the faculty of intellect, according to Nemesius, that ministers a knowledge of the future . . . ." <sup>105</sup>

What Plato and Nemesius take pains to call for in these cases is not a strong imagination but a strong rational faculty of dreaming.

Saint Augustine speaks of three kinds of vision (visio) to explain reactions to the Biblical passage on loving one's neighbor (Matthew XXII, 39): "Unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae videntur; alterum per spiritum hominis quo proximus et absens cogitatur; tertium per contuitem mentis, que ipsa dilectio intellecta conspicitur." <sup>106</sup> He names the visions "corporale, quo per corporis sensus corpora sentuntur," "spirituale, quo corporum similitudines spirita, non mente cernuntur," and "intellectuale, quo illae res quae nec corpora nec corporum formas habent conspiciuntur." <sup>107</sup>





Spiritual vision is properly imaginative and may occur in sleep, while intellectual vision is beyond all images, in Augustine's scheme. In adaptations, the three names may be used not for visiones but for somnia. After naming three types of vision as Augustine does, Hugo of Saint Victor adds: "Tria sunt quoque somniorum . . . ." The three are arranged in a series in which first sense, then imagination, then intellect dominate, so that "In tertio eliquatur ad purum onus faeculentorum phantasmatum: inde veritas splendor."<sup>108</sup> In such cases, it is not the importance of a strong imagination which is emphasized, but the importance of a strong intelligence.

#### "Imaginacioun" and "Fantasie"

In this glance at theories of imagination, I have attempted merely to expose some of the principal ways of accounting for psychic activity in dreams as a general background for viewing Chaucer's practice. I see no a priori reason to eliminate any of them as relevant in Chaucer's case. Presumably there would have been available to him various understandings of what features are included in imaginative action and various understandings of the prominence imagination holds with respect to dreams. Neither do I think it necessary to suppose that Chaucer has a special theory in mind each time he writes "imaginacioun" or "fantasie," although his uses fall within the complex range of the possibilities of imagination. Since the possibilities



are disparate, I wish to investigate what attributes Chaucer emphasizes by means of his direct uses of the words "imaginacioun" and "fantasie" and what indications these provide of ways of regarding the dream. Some of these indications appear to be quite direct and immediately applicable to our understanding of the dreams, while others appear to be suggestive.

As is the case for words of the dream vocabulary, there is, as far as I know, no verbal study to which I may refer for understanding Chaucer's uses of "imaginacioun" and "fantasie." For all of these terms some semantic account would seem to be needed. What I have in mind is the kind of process C. S. Lewis recommends regarding texts in preference to reading dictionaries for the understanding of words. "One understands a word much better if one has met it alive, in its native habitat," he explains in Studies in Words.<sup>109</sup> And his introductory comments list some of the factors to watch out for in trying to determine excluded and included meanings in texts of earlier ages than our own. He notes especially the danger of substitution on the part of the reader of meanings dominant in his own day for meanings dominant for the texts themselves.<sup>110</sup> Boris Ford makes basically the same point in advising an approach to reading Chaucer:

It is only by coming across particular words (such as 'curteisy', 'gentillesse', 'vileinye', 'fantasye', 'semblaunce' . . .) again and again in the various living and changing contexts of Chaucer's poetry that the reader begins to acquire a feeling for their specifically Chaucerian



shades of meaning and implications, a feeling more delicate and exact than he would get by providing himself with modern equivalents from a glossary or notes.<sup>111</sup>

My hope is to provide at least the most relevant understandings for this study in surveying dream words and words of imagination.

Chaucer's translation of Boethius incorporates one account of imagination (imaginatio) which emphasizes its limitations. Imagination is a higher power than sense since it is able to comprehend what sense comprehends while acting in the absence of sense data. It does so, however, by its own means; while sense (which Chaucer calls "wit") "comprehendith withoute-forth the figure of the body of the man that is establisschid in the matere subgett," the imagination "comprehendeth oonly the figure withoute the matere . . ." (Bo, V, P4, 150-160). By being limited to apprehension of forms of sensible and hence particular things, imagination is a lower power than reason and intelligence, which comprehend, respectively, universal species of particulars and "thilke same symple forme of man that is perdurably in the devyne thought" (Bo, V, P4, 160-170). Furthermore, imagination is lower in value than reason and intelligence by virtue of its distribution among beings belonging to beasts as well as to man:

For the wit of the body . . . cometh to beestis that ne mowen nat moewen herself her and ther . . . . But the ymaginacioun cometh to remuable bestis, that semen to han talent to fleeen or to desiren any thing. But resoun is al oonly to the lynage of mankynde, ryght as intelligence is oonly the devyne nature (Bo, V, P5, 20-40).





Additionally, Boethius offers what I take to be a condescending but, nevertheless, higher evaluation of imagination when it is linked to the dream. Philosophy explains to Boethius that he is unable to intuit true felicity because "thi syghte is ocupyed and destourbed by imagynacioun of erthly thynges," (occupatio ad imagines) though "thilke verray welefulnesse" is that "of which thyn herte [the Latin has animus] dremeth . . ." (Bo, III, Pl, 30-40). "Imaginacioun" here is simply apprehension of the sensible, but it turns out that imagination is also the power which permits dreaming about spiritual reality. "Certes also ye men, that ben erthliche beestes," explains Philosophy, "dremen alwey your bygynnynges, although it be with a thynne ymaginacioun . . ." (Bo, III, P3, 1-10).

Boethius enables Chaucer to bring together dream words with words of imagination and Chaucer links the two in other works as well. Pandarus attempts to overcome the dejection Troilus experiences as a result of the departure of Criseyde by belittling dreams. He groups Troilus' dreams with his superstitious fear of the crying of an owl, urging,

Thy swevenes ek and al swich fantasie  
Drif out, and let hem faren to meschaunce;  
For they procede of thi malencolie,  
That doth the fele in slep al this penaunce  
(TC, V, 358-61).

Presumably Pandarus is primarily interested simply in ridiculing Troilus' dreams so that "fantasie" here means, approximately, foolish idea. At the same time, Pandarus is reflecting the theory that dreams arise from disturbance in



the imagination, in this case by means of "malencolie" affecting the fantasy.

Similarly, Pandarus links dream and fantasy earlier in the same conversation. Troilus complains, "For wele I fele, by my maladie,/ And by my dremes now and yore ago,/ Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye," (TC, V, 316-18). Pandarus' first response is to assert, "That it is folye for to sorwen thus,/ And causeles, for which I kan namore" (TC, V, 325-26). For one who will not take good advice, Pandarus continues, "I kan nat sen in hym no remedie,/ But lat hym worthen with his fantasie" (TC, V, 328-29). The dream is treated as a delusive idea arising from excessive emotion.

The remaining instance in which "imaginacioun" is associated with "drem" is a problematic one. When the fox in The Nun's Priest's Tale appears in Chauntecleer's yard during the night after Chauntecleer's dream, the narrator tells us that the fox was "By heigh ymaginacioun forncast . . ." (CT, VII, 3217). Robinson presumably is expressing a majority view in explaining "heigh ymaginacioun" as "divine foreknowledge," finding its parallel in the later reference to "worthy forwityng" (CT, VII, 3243).<sup>112</sup> In that case, the dream is understood as one act and the "heigh ymaginacioun" as another. Victor Hamm points to the tradition of associating imagination with dream and he compares the term with the "alta phantasia" of Dante.<sup>113</sup> Its parallel then would be found (though Hamm does not quote it specifically) in the Nun's Priest's address to Chauntecleer,



"Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes" (CT, VII, 3232).

The exact meaning of "forncast" should be of help, but there is some difficulty about that term as well.

Albert C. Baugh agrees with Hamm on grounds that "less strain is placed on forncast."<sup>114</sup> But Kurath and Kuhn find only "premeditate, arrange . . ." for "forncast" (taking three citations from Chaucer, including this one, as their only examples).<sup>115</sup> At the same time they accept the understanding of "heigh ymaginacioun" that Robinson mentions. The reading thus produced is that God arranged the attack by col-fox on Chauntecleer. But in that case, the Nun's Priest's consideration of the relationship between God's "forwityng" and what "moot nedes bee" would seem to be irrelevant. The question Boethius and others considered was not whether God's plans would come to pass; it was whether God's knowledge (for which future is present) was to be understood as necessitating the actions which bring about the objects of knowledge.

Additionally, it seems easier to suppose that "heigh ymaginacioun" refers to Chauntecleer's dream as an imaginative event than to suppose that Chaucer attributes imagination to God. That this imagination is called "heigh" does not by itself make it more suitable for God. The old knight of The Merchant's Tale engages in "Heigh fantasye" (CT, IV, 1577) which turns out to be delusive. To understand "heigh ymaginacioun" as referring to the dream would bring the usage in The Nun's Priest's Tale in line with all of Chaucer's





other uses of the term: they refer to activities of the human soul.

For purposes here, the least important uses of imagination are those in the form of "image." All can perhaps be satisfactorily accounted for by reference to Kurath and Kuhn's categories, except the instance in The Legend of Good Women. That one comes with its own theory of imagination and is one of a series of incidents which complexly involve representations and emotional conditions.

Inflamed by desire "So wodly that his wit was al forgeten" (LGW, F, 1752) for the wife of an acquaintance who exhibits her as a model of "wifly chastite" (LGW, F, 1737), Tarquin determines to rape her. Propelling him to the deed is his imaginative recreation of her person:

A-morwe, whan the brid began to synge,  
 Unto the sege he cometh ful privily,  
 And by hymself he walketh soberly,  
 Th'yimage of hire recordyng alwey newe . . .  
 (LGW, F, 1757-60).

Tarquin recalls her coloring, her voice, her face, in that "image." Taking his description, presumably, from Ovid's account, Chaucer says of the process:

And as the se, with tempest al toshake,  
 That after, whan the storm is al ago,  
 Yit wol the water quappe a day or two,  
 Ryght so, thogh that hire forme were absent,  
 That plesaunce of hire forme was present . . .  
 (LGW, F, 1965-9).

In effect, Tarquin is in a waking dream. Albertus Magnus applies a water image to visions in sleep. Following Aristotle he speaks of the effect of movement of the senses



in sleep: "Phantasmata enim somniantium similia accidunt  
in somno idolis illis quae sunt in aqua apparentia . . . ." <sup>116</sup>

This ability to call up vivid scenes which excite or  
amplify emotions, pleasurable or unpleasurable, is emphasized  
in several other instances. How powerful the imagination  
may be in that respect is revealed by the Miller who remarks,

Lo, which a greet thyng is affeccoun!  
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,  
So depe may impressioun be take  
(CT, I, 3612-14).

The immediate occasion for the Miller's remark is the anxious  
response of the old carpenter, misled by his wife's lover,  
to the threat of a new Noah's flood.

Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see  
Noees flood come walwyng as the see  
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere  
(CT, I, 3615-17),

the Miller explains. Consequently, the carpenter "wepeth,  
weyleth, maketh sory cheere;/ He siketh with ful many a  
sory swogh" (CT, I, 3618f.).

For the old knight in The Merchant's Tale, similar  
imaginative activity is pleasurable, though he is as much  
a victim of it as the carpenter. <sup>117</sup> Januarie, who will make  
a marriage which leaves him cuckolded and pathetic in his  
salaciousness, works himself toward a choice of partners as  
"Heigh fantasye and curious bisynesse/ Fro day to day gan in  
the soule impresse . . . ." (CT, IV, 1577f.). The Merchant  
explains:

Many fair shap and many a fair visage  
Ther passeth thurgh his herte nyght by nyght,  
As whoso tooke a mirour, polissed bryght,



And sette it in a commune market-place,  
 Thanne sholde he se ful many a figure pace  
 By his mirour; and in the same wyse  
 Gan Januarie inwith his thoght devyse  
 Of maydens whiche that dwelten hym bisyde  
 (CT, IV, 1580-87).

The instance is a borderline case for consideration of dream narratives. A reference to a bed as the passage continues suggests that the old man is experiencing an event of sleep.

And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,  
 He purtreied in his herte and in his thoght  
 Hire fresshe beautee and hir age tendre,  
 Hir myddel smal, hire armes longe and sklendre . . .  
 (CT, IV, 1599-1602).

But it would be possible to understand that the old man remains awake as he continues wilfully projecting his inclinations in imaginative scenes. Ordinarily, I think it will be seen, Chaucer's dream narratives reflect the dreamer's thoughts and emotions without so directly obeying the will as language ("he purtreied in his herte and in his thoght") indicates for the man of the Merchant's account. At any rate, the experience is an imaginative one close to dreaming as its verbal echo with a passage affecting Troilus leads us to see. Excusing himself from friends after his first sight of Criseyde struck him with love, Troilus retires alone to his chamber where, "He doun upon his beddes feet hym sette,/ And first he gan to sike, and eft to grone . . ." (TC, I, 359f.). Troilus is awake, but a dream word is summoned for the case; he "thought ay on hire so, withouten lette," Chaucer explains,

That, as he sat and wook his spirit mette  
 That he hire saugh a-temple, and al the wise





Right of hire look, and gan it newe avise  
(TC, I, 361-64).

In that way, like the old man of The Merchant's Tale, "he made a mirour of his mynde,/ In which he saugh al holly hire figure . . ." (TC, I, 365F.).<sup>118</sup>

Such instances of vivid representation are rich enough to suggest traditional considerations of the imaginative link for love, dreams and poetry to which Bundy calls attention.<sup>119</sup> Plutarch's "The Dialogue on Love" speaks of such experiences:

Someone has said that the images entertained by the poetic imagination, because they impose themselves so vividly, are dreams of those wide awake; but this is much more true of the images entertained by the imagination of lovers who speak to the beloved and embrace him or chide him as though he were present.<sup>120</sup>

Quintilian is interested in the possibilities of vivid representation for purposes of effective oratory. Following the principle that "those feelings should prevail with us that we wish to prevail with the judge," Quintilian speaks of generating the emotions by experiences "which the Greeks call phantasiai and the Romans visions (visiones), whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes."<sup>121</sup> Anyone may cultivate such powers by attending to hopes and dreams we have while awake ("et spes inanes et velut somnia quaedam vigilantium") during which we are "haunted by the visions (imagines) of which I am speaking to such an extent that we imagine that we are travelling abroad, crossing the sea, fighting, addressing the people, or enjoying the use of wealth that we



do not actually possess, and seem to ourselves . . . to be acting."<sup>122</sup>

The passages from Chaucer produce an instance of Plutarch's imaginative lover and relate the imaginative activity with day dreaming. They do not overtly assert that the same power is useful for poetry, but their mute testimony may signal the possibility of linking imagination with poetry.

Troilus includes himself as well as others as an object of representation, as he suffers despairing thoughts during the absence of Criseyde. Troilus, we are told,

. . . of hymself ymagened he ofte  
To ben defet, and pale, and waxen lesse  
Than he was wont, and that men seyden softe,  
"What may it be? Who kan the sothe gesse  
Whi Troilus hath al this hevynesse?"  
(TC, V, 617-21).

The cause, the narrator explains, "nas but his malencolie,/ That he hadde of hymself swich fantasie" (TC, V, 623), and he continues with further instances:

Another tyme ymaginen he wolde  
That every wight that wente by the weye  
Hadde of hym routhe, and that they seyn sholde,  
"I am right sory Troilus wol deye"  
(TC, V, 624-27).

When the Parson uses the term he means represent, no doubt, though he provides no details. Worse sins than those which catch one unaware, the Parson explains, are those which "sourden of malice ymagined, avised, and forncast . . ." (CT, X, 445f.).

In remaining cases, contexts throw other values than



representation into relief; not a scene, but a quality of experience is emphasized. In these instances we see imagination as an expression of thought or as a reaction to emotions--in brief, as an instrument responsive to and affecting personal concerns. While the word "imaginacioun" ranges between both favorable and unfavorable connotations, "fantasie" appears exclusively with unfavorable connotations of delusion, emotional waywardness or subjective bias. Many instances combine factors complexly, but it may be possible to show dominant ones.

A variety of emotions leads to delusion through the imagination. Because the old carpenter saw so vividly, in a passage quoted, his case has already been considered in showing the productive power of imagination. In another passage of The Miller's Tale, emphasis is simply on fantasy as delusive. To explain why the old man has fallen from the roof in a tub he hoped would protect him from Noah's flood, his wife and wife's lover tell people that he was "wood" (CT, I, 3833). "He was agast so of Nowelis flood/ Thurgh fantasie," they claim, that he brought trouble on himself (CT, I, 3834-35). The Miller adds that "The folk gan laughen at his fantasye" (CT, I, 3840) so much that "no man his reson herde" (CT, I, 3844). Criseyde, worried about saving her honor in a liaison with Troilus, indicates that fear may lead her into delusion. She muses,

Ne love a man ne kan I naught, ne may,  
Ayeins my wyl; but elles wol I fonde,  
Myn honour sauf, plesse hym fro day to day.





Thereto nolde I nat ones han seyð nay,  
 But that I drede, as in my fantasye . . .  
 (TC, II, 477-82).

She concludes, "But cesse cause, ay cesseth maladie" (TC, II, 483).

Both the narrator of The Book of the Duchess and the faithful wife of The Franklin's Tale must also be thought to experience vivid representations, but in their cases the content of the representations is withheld from view in favor of stress on the consequences. Both suffer the loss or threat of loss of love and both suffer life-endangering sorrow. In both cases imagination refers directly to sorrowful thought and, by implication, to thoughts of suicide. The narrator of The Book of the Duchess is "as a mased thyng,/ Alway in poynt to falle a-down;/ For sorwful ymagynacioun/ Ys alway hooly in my mynde" (BD, 12-15). His condition cannot long be supported by nature and "thus melancolye/ And drede I have for to dye," he tells us (BD, 23f.). General description of his plight concludes:

Defaute of slep and hevynesse  
 Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse  
 That I have lost al lustyhede.  
 Suche fantasies ben in myn hede,  
 So I not what is best to doo  
 (BD, 25-29).

Her husband away for a year or two to seek honor at arms, Dorigen mourns so that "al this wyde world she sette at noght" (CT, V, 821). Her friends offer comfort, telling her "That causelees she sleeth herself, alas!" (CT, V, 825). Finally, after letters come from her husband, Dorigen begins



to cheer up sufficiently to accept her friends' invitation "To come and romen hire in compaignye,/ Away to dryve hire derke fantasye" (CT, V, 843f.). Similar to thoughts of excessive sorrowing are thoughts of excessive self-condemnation, the Parson points out, in urging against them as sins of Accidie.

Now comth wanhope, that is despeir of the mercy of God, that comth somtyme of to muche outrageous sorwe, and somtyme of to muche drede, ymaginyng that he hath doon so muche synne that it wol nat availlen hym, though he wolde repenten hym and forsake synne . . ." (CT, X, 690).

Not fear but wishfulness is at the root of Januarie's delusion as he settles on a choice of wives: "Hym thoughte ech oother mannes wit so badde/ That impossible it were to repplye/ Agayn his choys, thiswas his fantasye" (CT, IV, 1608-10). Troilus accuses Criseyde of delusive belief in hoping that her father, having betrayed the Trojan side, ever will return to Troy. "To trusten on nys but a fantasie," he tells her (TC, IV, 1470). With comically exalted wishfulness, the dreamer of The House of Fame wonders whether Jove has signaled an intention to "stellify" him by sending an eagle to his rescue outside the temple of Venus. He recognizes that he is not such a man as to attract the attention of the gods, but admits of the thought of becoming a star: "Loo, this was thoo my fantasye!" (HF, 593).

Troilus ironically accuses his sister of malice in interpreting his dream of Criseyde in a way which confirms his own worst suspicions of Criseyde's fidelity. When Cassandre says that Diomedes is the boar kissed by Criseyde



and that the dream shows "This Diomedé hire herte hath, and she his" (TC, V, 1517), Troilus denounces the interpretation as untrue. "Now sestow nat this fool of fantasie/ Peyneth hire on ladys for to lye?" he cries (TC, V, 1523f.). The people of Troy are convinced that Hector has been deluded into supporting Criseyde's request to remain in Troy, but they blame external forces rather than his own inclinations. "'Ector,' quod they, 'what goost may yow enspyre,/ This womman thus to shilde . . .'" (TC, IV, 187f.). Wanting Criseyde to be exchanged for Antenor, imprisoned by the Greeks, the people urge, "O Ector, lat tho fantasies be!" (TC, IV, 193).

In some instances, contexts narrow to make imagination stand for such wrongful ideas as suspicion, mistrust and jealousy. When it is known that Criseyde must leave Troy, Troilus tells Criseyde of his worry that she will become enamoured of a Greek knight (TC, IV, 1485-90), and urges that instead of going to Greece, she run away secretly with him (TC, IV, 1601). Criseyde is confident both of her fidelity and her ability to find a way back to Troilus, and tells Troilus that she is upset "that ye mystrusten me . . . ." (TC, IV, 1606). "Drif out the fantasies yow withinne," she urges, "And trusteth me . . . ." (TC, IV, 1615f.). Similarly, after their first night together when Troilus doubts that Criseyde loves him as much as he loves her, Criseyde pleads, "Lat in youre brayn non other fantasie/ So crepe, that it cause me to dye!" (TC, III, 1504f.). Troilus continues a victim of jealous mistrust after Criseyde





has left for Troy: "On hire was evere al that his herte thoughte,/ Now this, now that, so fast ymagenynge,/ That glade, iwis, kan hym no festeynge" (TC, V, 453-55). After his dream of Criseyde and the boar Troilus' suffering increases. "He ne eet, ne dronk, ne slep, ne no word seyde,/ Ymagynyng ay that she was unkynde . . ." (TC, V, 1440f.). "Ymaginatyf" is used in the same sense for the husband of Dorigen, who does not suffer from Troilus' malady. "No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,/ If any wight hadde spoke, while he was out,/ To hire of love" the Franklin explains, since "he hadde of it no doubte" (CT, V, 1094-96). The marquis of The Clerk's Tale, testing his wife to see whether he can erode her loyalty to him, is suspiciously alert to alterations in her behaviour. The Clerk explains: "For now gooth he ful faste ymagynyng/ If by his wyves cheere he myghte se,/ Or by hire word aperceyve, that she/ Were chaunged . . ." (CT, IV, 598-601).

Begrudging envy is indicated in Alceste's use of "ymagynyng." Defending the poet-dreamer from accusations brought against him, Alceste explains to the god of Love,

For in youre court is many a losengeour,  
And many a queynte totelere accusour,  
That tabouren in youre eres many a thyng  
For hate, or for jelous ymagynyng . . .  
(LGW, G, 328-31).

"The Complaint of Venus" includes a charge against Jelosie that "There doth no wyght nothing so resonable,/ That al nys harm in her ymagynyng" ("Comp." 35f.).<sup>123</sup> Criseyde softens the meaning of "fantasie" to excusable jealousy as



she instructs Troilus in such feelings.

. . . som manere jalousie  
Is excusable more than som, iwys;  
As whan cause is, and some swich fantasie  
With piete so wel repressed is  
That it unnethe doth or seyth amys . . .  
(TC, III, 1030-34).

Inclination and desire are the most appropriate glosses in some cases. The poor scholar who caused the old carpenter such trouble in The Miller's Tale "Hadde lerned art," we are told, "but al his fantasye/ Was turned for to lerne astrologye . . ." (CT, I, 3191-92). In a better time in the past, we learn in "The Former Age" the "lambish people, voyd of alle vyce,/ Hadden no fantasye to debate,/ But ech of hem wolde other wel cheryce" (50-52). Pandarus, taking much credit for winning Criseyde over to Troilus' purposes, does not want it known "that I thorough myn engyn/ Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,/ To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn . . ." (TC, III, 274-76). In a phrase in The Monk's Tale, "fantasie" means sexual intercourse. Cenobia believes strictly in limiting coitus to the service of propagation; consequently, she grants her husband marital privilege only when she knows she has not conceived: "Thanne wolde she suffre hym doon his fantasye/ Eft-soone, and nat but oones, out of drede" (CT, VII, 2285f.). Hypsipyle wants Hercules to extend her friendship without erotic inclinations:

To hym hire herte bar, he shulde be  
Sad, wys, and trewe, of wordes avyse,  
Withouten any other affecioun  
Of love, or evyl ymagynacyoun  
(LGW, F, 1520-23).



The Monk may have warlike propensities in mind in speaking of the "fantasies" of Cenobia and her husband. "And ye shul understonde how that he/ Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she," he says. If the Monk means that, Cenobia and her husband share the fantasies. If not, the Monk must be thinking that Cenobia has her fixed ideas and Odenake has his. In that event the two do not share their fantasies, but as the next lines indicate, "natheless, whan they were knyht in-feere,/ They lyved in joye and in felicitee . . ." (CT, VII, 2276f.).

Some contexts call special attention to the subjectivity of interests. In such cases, inclinations of fantasy become whims. The Wife of Bath asks permission to speak just as associations strike her, as she recounts her connubial adventures: "I preye to al this compaignye,/ If that I speke after my fantasye,/ As taketh not agrief of that I seye . . ." (CT, III, 189-91). Troilus wishes to impose his whim on others, as he rejects music in sorrow over Criseyde's departure. Chaucer explains, "For she, that of his herte berth the keye,/ Was absent, lo, this was his fantasie,/ That no wight sholde maken melodie" (TC, V, 460-62). Fantasy may also become a contrary tendency. Concerning love, the Wife of Bath says, all women are difficult:

We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,  
 In this matere a queynte fantasye;  
 Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,  
 Therafter wol we crie al day and crave  
 (CT, III, 515-18).





For the eagle, Geffrey's fantasy, is of that sort when he thinks over his reading instead of turning to the eagle for astronomical information. "Lat be," says the eagle, "thy fantasye!/ Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?" (HF, 992f.).

Imagination as opinion may be marked similarly as subjective. Trying to understand the marvellous horse of brass, made a gift of Cambyuskan's kingdom, the people conjecture variously:

Diverse folk diversely they demed:  
As many heddes, as manye wittes ther been.  
They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been,  
And maken skiles after hir fantasies . . .  
(CT, V, 202-05).

But, from the eagle's point of view, imagination may mean intellectually respectable opinion with no special stigma of subjectivity, as he brags about the discourse he is about to deliver on sound. He tells Geffrey:

Now herkene wel, for-why I wille  
Tellen the a propre skille  
And a worthy demonstracion  
In myn ymagynacion  
(HF, 725-28).

At any rate, Baugh glosses the word simply as "thinking, opinion."<sup>122</sup>

Imagination is perhaps best understood as supposition in several instances. Arcite mistakes the cause of Palamon's crying out on first seeing Emelye, and is corrected: "Cosyn, for sothe of this opinioun,/ Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun,/ This prison caused me nat for to crye . . ." (CT, I, 1093-95). Troilus is convinced by his first sight of Criseyde that loving her would be good, "Imaginyng that travaille nor



grame/ Ne myghte for so goodly oon be lorn . . ." (TC, I, 372f.). King Pelleus is concerned that a son of the brother with whom he alternates rule of the kingdom will upset the balance of power between them, "Ymagynyng that Jason myghte be/ Enhaunsed so . . . That from his regne he may ben put adoun" (LGW, F, 1410-13). Learning that his wife has been sent away during his absence, Kyng Alla knows that someone has practised treachery. He questions a messenger involved, and, we learn that "by wit and soutil enquerynge,/ Ymagined was by whom this harm gan sprynge" (CT, II, 888-89).

A final general category of meanings for imagination has to do with devising means, but connotations vary. Criseyde declares her confidence about being able to return from Greece by telling Troilus: "I am nought so nyce a wight/ That I ne kan ymaginen a wey/ To come ageyn that day that I have hight" (TC, IV, 1625-27). The same basic meaning takes a more sinister turn in the knight's description of a statuary in the temple of Mars: "Ther saugh I first the derke ymaginyng/ Of felonye . . .," he tells us (CT, I, 1995f.). Told of the problem of dividing a fart equally among his brothers, which a sick and unfriendly parishoner posed to the friar of The Summoner's Tale, a lord of the town is entranced: "in his herte he rolled up and doun,/ 'How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun/ To shew swich a probleme to the frere?'" (CT, III, 2217-19). In a more exalted content, a song of Troilus and Criseyde speaks of a contented lover who "Ymagynen ne kouthe how to be bet . . ." (TC, II, 836).



Related to devising is an instance of the mind's depicting circumstances in a way which carries suggestions of imagination as empathy. As narrator of Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer expresses his concern for the plight of Troilus at the conclusion of his final meeting with Criseyde:

For mannes hed ymagynen ne kan,  
 N'entendement considere, ne tonge telle  
 The cruele peynes of this sorwful man,  
 That passen every torment down in helle  
 (TC, IV, 1695-98).

When Troilus awakes from nightmarish dreams soon after Criseyde's departure, the context seems to require our understanding "fantasie" as the expression of emotion. Troilus would "wepe/ And rewen on hymself pitously," the narrator tells us, "That wonder was to here his fantasie" (TC, V, 261).

Since both Chaucer's words of imagination and the relevance of imaginative activity for dreams have been neglected by critics, I have set out Chaucer's uses of "imaginacioun" and "fantasie" in some detail and sought to mark, as nearly as possible, the principal implications. Not every use of "imaginacioun" and "fantasie" refers us immediately to the topic of dreams; but both isolated uses, as we have seen, and the composite features of the imagination thus disclosed, as we will see, do refer us to the dream. If one summed up imagination, in so far as it is revealed by Chaucer's terms, one might say that it is a powerful subjective activity liable to delusion which reacts to and provides concrete embodiment for thoughts, emotions and





conations.<sup>125</sup> I find no clear instance of combination in its specific sense,<sup>126</sup> but the imagination is shown to associate images in a new way (for instance, Alisoun with Noah's flood) as well as merely reproduce remembered images. Chaucer's overt presentation makes it appear that imagination belongs to the characters affected by it rather than to superior powers, though "heigh ymaginacioun" understood as prophetic power of Chauntecleer could be an exception, as could ghostly inspiration in Hector's case.

#### Dream Words apart from Experiences of Sleep

Metaphoric uses of the dream vocabulary, apart from designating experiences of sleep, emphasize one or another of the meaning of "imaginacioun" and "fantasie." An event involving Troilus and Criseyde presents a complex instance:

Thise ilke two, that ben in armes laft,  
 So loth to hem asonder gon it were,  
 That ech from other w~~eden~~ ben biraft,  
 Or elles, lo, this was hir mooste feere,  
 That al this thyng but nyce dremes were;  
 For which ful ofte ech of hem seyde, "O sweete,  
 Clippe ich yow thus, or elles I it meete?"

(TC, III, 1338-44).

The passage indicates what powerful representations dreaming may produce, since the two are capable of confusing their actual experience with dreaming. It indicates that dreaming may offer imaginative satisfaction for desires. And it indicates that dreaming is delusive. Similarly, listening to his converted brother's explanation of the spiritual life, Tiburce wonders whether he is the victim



of a lively fantasy (though he does not use that word).

"In soothnesse or in dreem I herkne this?." he asks (CT, VII, 261). Valerian replies that the delusion has been the world they live in: "'In dremes,' quod Valerian, 'han we ben/ Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywis'" (CT, VIII, 262f.). The begrudging envy of those who imagine untruths about lovers is indicated as Criseyde thinks over the dangers of an affair with Troilus:

How bisy, if I love, ek most I be  
 To plesen hem that jangle of love, and dremen,  
 And coye hem, that they seye noon harm of me!  
 (TC, II, 799-801).

Wrongful suppositions of such people may spread mistrust, Criseyde warns Troilus:

. . . yet gan she hym biseche,  
 Although with hym to gon it was no fere,  
 For to ben war of goosish peoples speche,  
 That dremen thynges whiche that nevere were . . .  
 (TC, III, 582-85).

To reassure Troilus that she will find a way back to Troy, Criseyde tells him she will work on her father's susceptibility to wishful thinking until he supposes himself in heaven. She will hint to her father of gold and honor from her friends in Troy, she explains. "So what for o thyng and for other, swete," she says to Troilus. "I shal hym so enchaunten with my sawes,/ That right in heven his sowle is, shal he meete" (TC, IV, 1394-96). "Dremen" means engage in fanciful thought, or daydream, in a passage Chaucer translated from Otes de Granson. "The Complaint of Venus" details disordered reactions to love, such as "wake abedde, and fasten at the



table" ("Complaint," 27), and includes "Pleyne in slepyng, and dremen at the daunce . . . " ("Complaint," 31).

In his curious use of "meten," the black knight in The Book of the Duchess is evidently thinking of the dream as a state of volitionless subjectivity. He reports that he promised always to be true to his lady and addressed her thusly:

For youres is alle that ever ther ys  
 For evermore, myn herte swete!  
 And never to false you, but I mete,  
 I nyl, as wys God helpe me soo!  
                                   (BD, 1232-35).

#### Personal and Impersonal Construction of "Dremen" and "Meten"

The verbal forms "dremen" and "meten" readily disclose meanings of imagination when events of sleep are introduced. Simultaneously, however, they raise an issue of the relationship of dream words to the objective dream.<sup>127</sup> Unlike "thinken" which has only an impersonal form, "dremen" and "meten" have both a personal and impersonal form. It is possible that the two forms have at times been felt to reflect a semantic difference. In commenting on ballads, Max Arnold suggests that personal construction is associated with what moderns think of as psychological dreams, while the impersonal is associated with something else. The ballad, he states, "verwendet sogar das persönliche und nicht einmal mehr das unpersönliche Verb: 'him met,' 'him thoughte,' das immerhin noch den Anklang an die Seelenreise bewahrt hat."<sup>128</sup> For Arnold the question does not concern only the dream as a journey of the soul, but





the general matter of the source of a dream.<sup>129</sup> It may then be possible that poets sometimes have felt that personal forms are appropriate for dreams recognized as one's own psychological creation, while impersonal forms are appropriate for dreams which are objective in any of several senses (as an actual adventure of the soul, as visitation during sleep by a ghost or other dream figure, as a supernaturally instigated experience). Is there a sharp semantic difference between the forms in Chaucer's works? Since the question is a neglected one in critical treatments of the dream in Chaucer, a few observations may be of some heuristic value. I want to look briefly at instances which involve primarily the question of a supernatural source for the dream.

There may be some support for assigning the personal and impersonal constructions different weights in the cases of The Book of the Duchess and The Parliament of Fowls. The difficulty is that one must proceed from the original uncertainty to a new uncertainty. In The Book of the Duchess the narrator uses only impersonal constructions for his own dream ("me mette" in lines 276, 293, 298, 442, 1320 and 1321). In The Parliament of Fowls the narrator uses personal construction for the dream he has ("I mette," 95) and for the dream he hopes to have ("That I shal mete som thyng for to fare/ The bet," 698f.). It would be possible to argue that the main dream of The Book of the Duchess is to be understood as God-sent and that the dream of



The Parliament of Fowls is to be understood as a psychological creation of the dreamer, but extended argument is required; the matter is not self-evident as discussions of dream lore in chapter II and the works themselves in chapter III will indicate. Beyond the verbal contrast affecting those two works, instances suggest that the personal and impersonal constructions are fundamentally interchangeable. In The House of Fame we read "me mette" three times (lines 119, 313, and 560) and "I mette" three times (lines 60ff., 110 and 523), all in reference to the narrator's own dream. The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women, G, has "me mette" (104) to introduce the dream and "I mette" (140) for an event occurring within it.

In relating Criseyde's dream of the eagle which tears out her heart, Chaucer says, "And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette" (TC, II, 925). In relating the dream in which Troilus sees Criseyde with a boar, Chaucer makes the construction personal, "He mette . . ." (TC, V, 1238). If the two dreams differ with respect to reflecting trends of the dreamer's personality, it is that dream with the personal construction for "meten" which is the divinely sent dream, as Troilus claims. Chauntecleer shifts from personal construction for one dream to impersonal construction for a second quoting from the same author and without giving any indication that he distinguishes the dream incidents as to kind. Thus in the first of the exempla, Chauntecleer says "This man mette in his bed,



ther as he lay" (CT, VII, 3002) and "Twies in his slepyng dremed hee" (CT, VII, 3012). Concerning the second, he relates, "Hym mette a wonder dreem agayn the day . . . " (CT, VII, 3078).

As to the Chauntecleer's dream, while Chauntecleer says only "me mette," Pertelote speaks to him of "this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght" (CT, VII, 2926) and the narrator tells us of Chauntecleer's activities after "he hadde met that dreem" (CT, VII, 3255).

Other instances of personal and impersonal construction lend themselves less readily to significant juxtaposition and consequently contribute less that is immediately useful to the questions posed. The Wife of Bath's locution may be cited, however, since it seems to offer occasion for both personal and impersonal construction, if one assumes the phrasings distinguish personally made from impersonally presented experience. As the Wife tells us, she made up a dream to attract a lover. "And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght" (CT III, 577), the Wife tells the company. If we understand the Wife at that point to be acknowledging her creative role in the dream, then the phrasing fits the pattern of the supposition made about the two constructions. But the same reasoning would lead us to expect "me dremed of it right naught" where the Wife says "I dremed of it right naught" (CT, III, 582). For what the Wife wishes to deny is that the dream was truly of a sort in which she was a passive recipient.





If we think of the personal and impersonal forms of "meten" and "dremen" in isolation, the impersonal form suggests itself as a way of allowing narrators to remain true to the experiential quality of dreams in so far as dreams present themselves as realities impinging on the dreamer. I have not, however, found that Chaucer's narratives introduced by the impersonal construction differ from those introduced by personal construction. During the course of any extended narrative, Chaucer may make more or less use of the feel of seeming reality as later discussion will show. The evidence reviewed indicates that the impersonal form carries a stronger flavoring in itself of seeming reality, but that the two constructions are otherwise interchangeable. "Me mette" or "me dreme" is not consistently associated with dreams God-sent or distanced from the interests of the narrator in opposition to personal forms.

#### Dream Words Related to Experiences of Sleep

If personal and impersonal constructions differ no more than I have indicated in Chaucer's works, then we may look to common functions of the two forms of "dremen" and "meten" as they serve, like "thinken," in announcing imaginative apprehension. How much they tell us about objectivity of dreams differs with differing senses of that term. Any of the expressions mentioned would seem to establish the expectation that the dream is not



objective in the sense of constituting an actual occurrence. To find that the dream is, nevertheless, actual would require contradictory evidence--for example, a physical change in the dreamer, a token left from the dream, a waking corroboration at the time of the dream that an actual event is taking place.<sup>130</sup> In Chaucer's works, no such contradictory evidence appears. When we consider objective determinants for dreaming experience, the situation is not entirely the same. For instance, Chauntecleer tells us that Andromacha "dremed on the same nyght biforn/ How that the lyf of Ector should be lorn" (CT, VII, 3143f.). We could not claim that the dream constituted some manner of actual experience for Andromacha without adding words to Chaucer's text; he tells us nothing beyond the imaginative apprehension. But without adding words to Chaucer's text, we may interpret the dream as subjective in the sense that it stems from Andromacha's preoccupations or as objective in the sense that it results from divine influence. The text gives no clear guidance, and the experience could be non-actual but divinely inspired, since the imagination may serve higher forces. I think it can be said that Chaucer's accounts characteristically leave us in doubt about objective determinants, while he clearly excludes objective occurrences for dreams--but exceptions may be found. A series of contrasts from within his works will help establish the force of "dremen" and "meten" and "thinken"



in Chaucer's poems.

At the beginning of Valerian's conversion "ther gan appeere/ An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,/ That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde," as the Second Nun tells us (CT, VIII, 200-202). After urging Valerian to believe in Christ, he "vanysshed" (CT, VIII, 345-56). The monk briefly recounts Balthazar's experience: " And on a wal this kyng his eyen caste,/ And saugh an hand, armlees, that wroot ful faste . . . " (CT, VII, 2202-03). These visionary experiences are related as bodily manifestations. An extreme instance of objectivity in that sense is reached in The Man of Law's Tale when a false accuser of the God-protected Custance is struck down "In sighte of every body in that place" (CT, II, 672) and "A voys was herd in general audience . . . " (CT, II, 673), leaving the people "Of this mervaille agast . . . " (CT, II, 677). Though supernatural, all these sights are seen with the bodily eye. We may call them visionary experiences, but no words of Chaucer's basic dream vocabulary appear with them.

Except that they are to be understood as concocted for specific purposes and are not disinterested accounts, the two visions recorded by the Summoner lie close to these experiences. Like them they report that people "saugh" something occur. In contrast we learn of Troilus that "He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete" (TC, V, 1238), just as we read of the imaginative carpenter that "Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see/ Noees flood" (CT, I,





3615). In these cases "meten" and "thinken" clearly qualify what occurs as imaginative experience, as opposed to actual accomplishment.

The same contrast can be made for the experience Aeneas reports to Dido. The account reports that in sleep "Mercurye his message hath presented" (LGW, F, 1297) ordering Aeneas to Troy. That Mercury would come to him shows how urgent his task is, Aeneas would have Dido believe. In The Knight's Tale, Mercury again brings advice in sleep, but this time it is to one whose distraught psychological condition has been emphasized. We read,

Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie  
Biforn hym stood . . . (CT, I, 1384-6).

Appropriate in its context, the phrasing "hym thoughte" makes it unlikely that the reader is to take this appearance of Mercury as the kind of objective event Aeneas wants Dido to believe in.<sup>131</sup>

Aeneas' report is unusual among Chaucer's dream accounts in its lack of attention to reactions of the dreamer, though Aeneas does allude to being "tormented" (LGW, F, 1296). The narrative of Ceyx' dream may also be mentioned in that respect, but we may take the objectively presented Morpheus as a veil for reactions of the dreamer herself which otherwise are unmentioned. Morpheus, we are told, animates the dead body of Ceyx' husband to answer her prayer that she learn her missing husband's fate (BD, 192-211). Among dreams in which the terms immediately



under investigation occur only the first of Chauntecleer's exempla seems close to stating its case as if an objective occurrence--the appearance of a dead man's spirit--were taking place. A traveler "mette in his bed, ther as he lay,/ How that his felawe gan upon hym calle,/ And seyde, 'Allas! for in an oxes stalle/ This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye'" (CT, VII, 3002-05). Later this fellow "Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, 'I am now slawe'" (CT, VII, 3014). But even in this case, the spirit is not, I think, felt to be present; the event has the feel of a telepathic message, since the language itself speaks of how things seem rather than are.

More specific relationship between dream and imagination may be noted than merely the assertion of imaginative apprehension. Often in Chaucer "meten," "dremen" and "thinken" seem to force the reader's awareness that, to paraphrase Boethius, the likeness is being presented without the substance. That is, when Chaucer uses either the personal or impersonal construction of "meten" or "dremen" to announce that a dream is taking place, context emphasizes that an imaginative apprehension, rather than an actual occurrence, is taking place. Hence, John Gardner quite rightly comments on a change in presentation of the birds' song from the F to G version of the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women: "he does not actually hear birds talking but only dreams he does."<sup>132</sup> Gardner has in mind the phrasing in G, "This song to herkennen



I dide al myn entente,/ For-why I mette I wiste what they mente . . . ." (PLGW, G, 139f.). Thus the love-longing Absolon of The Miller's Tale tells us "Al nyght me mette eek I was at feeste" (CT, I, 3684), but his hunger is not appeased. Scipio does not visit the narrator of The Parliament of Fowls but the narrator speculates as to whether reading about Scipio "made me to mete that he stod there" (PF, 108). Robinson seems concerned about whether Chaucer indeed slept without night attire,<sup>133</sup> but he need not be. "And in the dawenyge I lay"--" (Me mette thus)," the narrator insists--"in my bed al naked" (BD, 292f.). Chauntecleer remains on his perch while, he explains, "Me mette how that I romed up and doun/ Withinne our yeerd" (CT, VII, 2898f.). In a brief account, Chauntecleer asks concerning Croesus, "Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,/ Which signified he sholde anhanged bee?" (CT, VII, 3139-40).

In these instances, an overt or implied contrast between physical circumstances of the dreamer and conditions within the dream serve to highlight the imaginative character of the dream event. Another means of seeing imaginative emphasis is to note similarities in mental or emotional behaviour between those who dream and those who imagine. The group of dreamers referred to by the narrator of The Parliament of Fowls make sleep serve such fantasies as they might have during the day, in a passage for which Robinson notes that there is a "close parallel"





in Claudian:<sup>134</sup>

The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,  
 To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon;  
 The juge dremeth how his plees been sped;  
 The cartere dremeth how his cartes gon;  
 The riche, of gold; the knyght fyght with his fon;  
 The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;  
 The loveere met he hath his lady wonne  
 (PF, 99-105).

Anelida seems quite conscious of her own propensities for using sleep for wishful thinking when she complains to Arcite:

For in this world nis creature  
 Wakyng, in more discomfiture  
 Then I, ne more sorowe endure.  
 And yf I slepe a furlong wey or tweye,  
 Then thynketh me that your figure  
 Before me stont . . .  
 (Anelida and Arcite, 325-30).

'Troilus' imaginative sufferings (TC, V, 617-21 and V, 623, cited in the discussion of imagination) have their counterpart in sleep as he began to groan and

. . . dremen of the dredefulleste thynges  
 That myghte ben; as, mete he were allone  
 In place horrible, makynge ay his mone,  
 Or meten that he was amanges alle  
 His enemys . . .  
 (TC, V, 247-52).

The skeptic in The Nun's Priest's Tale reacts to a warning with scorn for dreams of sleep, quite as if they represented the same sort of wilful suppositions Criseyde complained about. Criseyde says that in foolish envy people "dremen thynges whiche that nevere were . . . " (TC, III, 585). The skeptic is concerned solely about foolishness, not envy, but he echoes, "Men dreme of thyng that nevere was ne shal" (CT, VII, 3094).



Not every line in which "meten" or dremen" appears makes the same urgency of appeal to be translated, as it were, as imaginative activity; but I know of no instance that is contradictory to that appeal. When, for example, Alcyone asks for grace to "mete/ In my slep som certeyn sweven"(ll8f.), we may wish to understand "mete" as something like receive. But both the weight of medieval dream theory and Chaucer's practice indicates that Alcyone expects the reception to be an imaginative one--always barring, of course, some counterindication that an actual occurrence takes place. What I have attempted to show is the intimacy of the dream language with imagination. Roughly speaking, the means have been two: to show that dreaming is named imagining (when dream words come together with words of imagination) and to show that dreaming (in connection with metaphoric uses or in connection with sleeping experience) imitates imaginative activity as Chaucer's terms disclose it. Identification of the dream as imaginative activity involves the dream both in the abilities of representation and expressiveness and in the liabilities of susceptibility to illusion proper to imagination as Chaucer presents it.

#### Other Words Associated with the Dream Vocabulary

Thus far in probing Chaucer's vocabulary beyond the point of correspondence with terms in dream typologies, I have concentrated on establishing a direct relationship



with the imagination as Chaucer presents it. I want now to turn from direct reference to the imagination toward a pattern of concerns revealed by other words associated with the dream words "dremen," "meten" and "sweven" in their several forms. In order to try to remain as close as possible to Chaucer's guidance, I will not relate instances directly to the imagination; but it will be seen, I believe, that the concerns exposed by other words bear in some way on implications of viewing the dream as imaginative. I refer to all three general categories of concern to be investigated: to the question of whether dreams are trustworthy, to the experiential impact of dreams, and to the relationship of dreams to poetry.

For this stage of investigation, my procedure resembles to some extent that advocated by Clyde T. Hankey in the article, "Defining-Context, Association Sets, and Glossing Chaucer."<sup>135</sup> Like him I look for words repeatedly associated with dream terms, group them with words similar in meaning and seek the fewest number of concepts which may account for them. The single line is Hankey's base, but I include neighboring lines when they complete the thought. Unlike Hankey, I am interested in a specific sort of word--one that can be construed in some way as a judgement about the qualities dreams have or the functions they serve. For that purpose, I am not interested at the moment in references to night and sleep, which tell us when dreams occur but not what their nature is. I exclude as well lines which say





something merely about the dreamer or which announce a content particular for the given dream. I distinguish, for example, such a line as that about birds, "And as me mette, they sate among . . . " (BD, 289) from such a line as "And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges" (TC, V, 248). The first tells us something which occurs in a single dream, the second additionally suggests that dreams may have the quality of being terrifying.

Words repeated include, for example, forms of "expounde," "drede," "telle," "wonder," "warnyng," "saugh" and "vanitee." They are, I believe, accounted for by the three concepts already suggested: that the dream is something which succeeds or fails in pointing beyond itself, that it is something impressive in itself, that it is something which is related to poetry. While these three points are, I believe, irreducible, they are not unrelated, and some words suggest more than one of the categories. But each category suggested will, I think, be sufficiently emphasized by one or another example to establish its independent status.

Individual assertions in the poems about dreams represent opinions of characters or of Chaucer's personae. The opinions may be grave, humorous, superficial, profound in many ways which vary with their contexts. With the proposed approach, I would expect neither to pinpoint Chaucer's beliefs concerning the dream, nor to expose the varieties of treatments they may receive. A composite view



of associations, however, should prove heuristic in helping to disclose what Chaucer feels is worthwhile having characters and personae think about in connection with the dream.

Omitted from consideration at this time are terms referring to causality (such as "engendren," "cause," "make"). Causality could be incorporated in discussing the question of meaning, but will perhaps be better understood in later study of dream lore. Except for causation and the already treated imagination, the concepts proposed are intended to be exhaustive for all frequently repeated judgments in the individual lines.

Partly because of quarrels in The Nun's Priest's Tale and in Troilus and Criseyde about the value of dreams, more words are related to the concept of the dream as significant than to any other concept. Terms and expressions which may be grouped together fundamentally provide a variety of perspectives on the question of meaningfulness.

"Warnynge," "befalle," "dreden," in one of its functions, and "turne to goode" emphasize prediction or future benefit. Chauntecleer calls on the authority of the Biblical Joseph to attest that dreams are "somytyme-- I sey nat alle--/Warnynge of thynges . . . " (CT, VII, 3131f.). Macrobius also, he notes, "Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been/Warnynge of thynges . . . " (CT, VII, 3125f.). The Nun's Priest explains that Chauntecleer himself was "ful wel ywarned" by his dreams (CT, VII, 3232). In



The Legend of Good Women, Egistes, having married his daughter to his brother's son, wants her husband killed, he explains, "For in my dremes it is warned me/ How that my newew shal my bane be" (LGW, F, 2658f.). Troilus interprets some of his dreams in the sense of warning, though he does not use the word:

For wele I fele by my maladie  
And by my dremes now and yore ago  
Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye  
(TC, V, 316-18).

When he proclaims "That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede" (CT, VII, 3107), Chauntecleer has warnings of disaster told of in his exempla in mind.

But prediction need not always be menacing. Chaucer's translation, The Romaunt of the Rose, explains that the narrator had a dream "That lyked me wonders wel," and that "in that sweven is never a del/ That it nys afterward befalle" (RR, 27-29). That Absolon of The Miller's Tale is thinking of favorable prediction is clear from the association he establishes for it. "My mouth hath icched al this longe day;/ That is a signe of kysyng atte leeste," he explains (CT, I, 3682f.) and adds without further comment, "Al nyght me mette eek I was at a feeste" (CT, I, 3684). Criseyde may be making a bantering remark in telling Pandarus that she dreamed of him, but her expression has to do with benefit in the future. "This nyght thrie," she tells him, "To goode mot it turne, of you I mette" (TC, II, 89f.). Some manner of future benefit is also indicated when the narrator of The House of Fame prays, "God turne us





every drem to goode!" (HF, 1 and 80). Chauntecleer may be thinking rather of avoiding trouble than gaining a benefit when he says of his own dream: "Now God . . . my sweven recche aright" (CT, VII, 2896).

Sometimes emphasis is on the insight immediately yielded by a dream, and not on its predictive capacity. Some form of "see" or "know" is used. Thus Troilus when Criseyde has failed to return to Troy in the time she allotted,

. . . mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete  
That slepte ayeyn the brighte sonnes hete  
And by this bor first in his armes folde  
Lay, kissing ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde . . .  
(TC, V, 1238-41).

Interpreting the dream immediately as proof that Criseyde has been unfaithful, Troilus explains to Pandarus:

The blysfyl goddes, thorough here grete myght,  
Han in my drem yshewed it ful right.  
Thus yn my drem Criseyde have I byholde . . .  
(TC, V, 1250-52).

The eagle in The House of Fame seems to be thinking of superior perception, not predictive features, in his brief reference to the Dream of Scipio as he carries Geffrey toward the House of Fame. Bragging about how high they have flown, he asserts that others were not nearly as high: "Ne the Kyng, Daun Scipio,/ That saw in drem, at poynt devys,/ Helle and erthe and paradys . . . " (HF, 916-18). Ceyx does not wish to know about the future, but specifically seeks knowledge of what already has happened in the prayer,

Send me grace to slepe, and mete  
In my slep som certeyn sweven



Wherthourgh that I may knowen even  
 Whether my lord be quyk or ded  
 (BD, 118-21).

The narrator of The Parliament of Fowls is asking for some manner of insight, but he phrases it as guide to conduct when, at the conclusion of a dream that followed some reading, he says: "I hope, ywis, to rede so som day/ That I shal mete som thyng for to fare/ The bet . . . " (PF, 697-99).

Rather than the manner of significance, words such as "expounde," souned," "signifiaunce" and "arede" emphasize the fact that a dream requires interpretation. Denials of the value of dreams may take the form of denials of the fact of significance, objection to the kind of significance, or challenge to the possibility of interpreting correctly.

"Vanyte" is a favorite word in The Nun's Priest's Tale for denying meaning to dreams. "Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is," Pertelote insists (CT, VII, 2922). The skeptic declares that "swevenes been but vanytees and japes" (CT, VII, 3092). Though later convinced of the importance of his dream, the traveler in Chauntecleer's first exemplum at one point thought "his dreem nas but a vanitee" (CT, VII, 3011). Chauntecleer challenges, "looketh wel/ In the olde testament of Daniel,/ If he heeld dremes any vanitee" (CT, VII, 3127-9). Both the skeptic of The Nun's Priest's Tale and Pandarus echo an expression of condemnation: "I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges," says the skeptic (CT, VII, 3090), and Pandarus declares, "A straw for alle swevenes signifiaunce!" (TC, V, 362). The



Squire limits his denunciation to dreams under special circumstances--in this case dominance of vapors rising from food--when he refuses to tell the dreams of courtiers: "Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,/ That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge," he declares (CT, V, 358f.).

One implication of "vanyte" is that a dream may disappoint the dreamer, so that one may, as the presumably non-Chaucerian section of The Romaunt of the Rose puts it, "dreme of joye, all but in vayne . . .," (RR, 2574). But taken as instruction, a worthless dream may actively mislead. Thus Pandarus tells Troilus, "Have I nat seyde er this,/ That dremes many a maner man bigile?" (TC, V, 1276f.).

In one statement, Pandarus fires a double barrel at dreams, claiming they are at once worthless and morally wrong. Remembering Troilus' worry about both dreams and the shrieking of the owl as harbingers of death (TC, V, 316-20), Pandarus condemns both as unwarranted divinations:

Wel worthe of dremes ay thise olde wives,  
And treweliche ek augurye of thise fowles,  
For fere of which men wenen lese here lyves,  
As revenes qualm, or shrichyng of thise owles.  
To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is

(TC, V, 379-83).

The Parson is more explicit still about divinatory significance:

What seye we of hem that bileeven on divynailes, as by flight or by noyse of briddes, or of beestes, or by sort, by nigromancie, by dremes, by chirkyng of dores, or crakkyng of houses, by gnawynge of rattes, and swich manere wrecchednesse?/ Certes, al this thyng is deffended by God and by hooly chirche (CT, X, 600-05).

Another approach to significance of dreams is to





admit that they can be innocently meaningful, but to deny that they can be correctly understood. "Ther woot no man aright what dremes mene," Pandarus says in one stage of argument with Troilus (TC, V, 364). Later, he notes that "folk expounden hem amys" (TC, V, 1278), and he warns Troilus, "thow kanst no dremes rede" (TC, V, 1281). Nevertheless, Pandarus offers an interpretation of Troilus' dream which absolves Criseyde of guilt, concluding, "Thus sholdestow thi drem aright expounde!" (TC, V, 1288).

Among the effects of hyperbolic praise of their dreams by the narrator of The Book of the Duchess is that of asserting significance but challenging the possibility of adequate interpretation. "Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,/ So wonderful," he declares, "that never yit/ Y trowe no man had the wyt/ To konne wel my sweven rede . . ." (BD, 276-79). He asserts that neither Joseph nor Macrobius could "I trowe, arede my dremes even" (BD, 289).

"Wonderful" together with "such a," "ynly swete" and "sely," suggests something more, however, than the question of how dreams point beyond themselves. They suggest that dreams may be fascinating as experiences and as such indistinctly related to interpretation. When Chauntecleer says of a traveler that "Hym mette a wonder dream agayn the day" (CT, VII, 3078), he seems to have almost only the portent of the dream in mind, since that is what he is exemplifying. But the narrator of The Book of the Duchess, as we have seen, speaks of the dream as "ynly swete" and



stresses elsewhere "The wondres me mette in my sweven" (BD, 442). Having declared he does not know how to utilize theories of dream causation in determining the significance of dreams, the narrator of The House of Fame nevertheless hopes some good will come of his dream, because it is "So wonderful a drem . . ." (HF, 62). It is, he says later, "So sely an avisyon . . ." (HF, 513) that famous dreamers "Ne mette such a drem as this!" (HF, 517). Despite comic hyperbole, the narrator may be attempting to guide the reader's reaction to his dream in a definite way. In later discussions, I will consider the possibility that the term provides the narrator a means of declaring the dream a true or revelatory one. In itself, the word seems to emphasize experiential quality of the dream.

Besides arousing a sense of wonder, the dream experience may be distressing in some way. "Drecched," "grone," "drede" and "agaste" point to that factor. Thus in his nightmare, Troilus would "grone/ And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges . . ." (TC, V, 247f.). The old carpenter in The Miller's Tale, frightened by deceptive stories of a new Noah's flood, falls asleep as he awaits the rain. His sleep suffering is made comic by juxtaposition of reference to soul and body: "For travaille of his goost he groneth soore,/ And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay" (CT, I, 3646f.). The comedy of mixing animal and human references aside, Chauntecleer's dream is occasion for the narrator's brief comment on the usualness of suffering during



sleep. "This Chauntecleer gan gromen in his throte,/ As man that in his dreem is drecched soore" (CT, VII, 2886f.). The Man of Law feels that distress in sleep would be in order for the trouble-beset Constance. Constance's mother-in-law has sent a lying message which orders Constance to be cast off alone to sea. "O my Custance," laments the narrator, "wel may thy goost have feere,/ And, slepyng, in thy dreem been in penance" (CT, II, 803f.).

Much of the talk in The Nun's Priest's Tale about fear of dreams is directed to consideration of dreams as meaningful. But there are elements as well of experiential qualities in dreams. Pertelote explains that the humours cause distress in sleep. It is "rede colera, pardee,/ Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes/ Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes . . ." (CT, VII, 2928-30). The humour of melancholy "Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie/ For feere of blake beres . . ." (CT, VII, 2934f.). Thus when Pertelote scolds, "Allas! and konne ye been agast of swevenys?" (CT, VII, 2921), she seems to include reference both to internal distress and to the meaningfulness of dreams.

Pleasurable experience in dreams includes the imaginative satisfactions we noted in connection with the passage from Claudian (PF, 99-105). Joking about her first night with Troilus, Pandarus tells Criseyde "Al this nyght so reyned it, allas,/ That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,/ Han litel laiser had to slepe and mete" (TC, III,





1557-59). The narrator of The House of Fame wishes general "joye . . . Of alle that they dreme to-yere" to those who hear his poem (HF, 83f.).

"Telle," "ryme," and, in certain contexts, "sleep" relate dreams to poetry. A dream may, of course, be told for non-poetic reasons, as Troilus relates his dream to Cassandre merely to have it interpreted: "al his drem he tolde hire er he stant . . ." (TC, V, 1452). But the reason may be more complex, involving an obligation by the writer to do justice to the experience. Thus the narrator of The Book of the Duchess tells us, "Thoghte I, 'Thys ys so queynt a sweven,/ That I wol, be processe of tyme,/Fonde to put this sweven in ryme/ As I kan best . . ." (BD, 1330-33). To do well is important. The narrator of The Romaunt of the Rose explains that "this drem wol I ryme aright" (RR, 31).

The narrator of The House of Fame echoes the wish of The Romaunt of the Rose in a passage which further confounds dream with poem. Playfully, he calls upon the god of sleep, not for the power to dream, but for the power to tell his dream, quite as if his dream were a poem. "Prey I that he wol me spede/ My sweven for to telle aryght,/ Yf every drem stonde in his myght," he says (HF, 78-80). In the proem to Book II he calls upon his own thought, as the power which "wrot al that I mette/ And in the tresorye hyt shette" (HF, 523f.) now to provide the power "To tellen al my drem aryght" (HF, 527). The Book of the Duchess concludes with a line which refers at once to the dream which has been



recounted in a poem and to the poem as a whole as a "sweven." "This was my sweven; now hit ys doon," the narrator declares (BD, 1334).

Instead of being the poem itself, the dream (implied by the condition of sleep) may be the source of inspiration for a poem. To introduce his tale, the Franklin apologizes for "rude speche" consequent upon his not having learned rhetoric (CT, V, 718f.). "I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernasso," he explains (CT, V, 721), referring apparently to traditions of poetic inspiration in sleep. Robinson cites as a source for the line a passage from Persius which states that the poet is unable to remember a dream on Parnassus which would have made him a poet.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, the "Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan" includes the disclaimer, "Ne thynke I never of slep to wake my muse" (Lenvoy, 38).

I have attempted to reveal principal ways in which, as indicated by his vocabulary, it crossed Chaucer's mind to think of dreams. The combination of views does not describe each dream particularly. That is, not every dream is at once true and false (at least, not so in the same respect), a warning about the future and a revelation of the present and past, an experience both distressing and joyful, an event and a poem. At the same time, the combination of views does have implications for approaches to any of Chaucer's dreams. For example, approaches should not be based on assumptions which preclude the possibility of relevance of any of the views exposed, as if the dream for



Chaucer had to mean only a signification, or only an experience, or only a poem.

The study of imagination has helped us, I believe, to understand the difficulties of judging signification to which Chaucer calls considerable attention. It directly helps us as well to understand the power in experiencing a dream of which the lines speak. Implications of the perspective of imagination for the dream as something told are more remote. Only through direct study of the dream narratives is it possible to show what effects there may be in relating dreaming to telling as Chaucer's lines do. But it may be seen, I think, that the imaginative act may constitute in effect a means of telling oneself a story.

### Summary

In the first chapter I have attempted to explore what Chaucer means when he says dream or some equivalent. The question is not one to which Chaucer's critics have devoted much attention. The most frequent assumption critics seem to have made about Chaucer's vocabulary is that the term may somehow be explained by Macrobius' terms. Carrying out an investigation to determine how useful such an explanation is, I found that Macrobius' terms provide no clue to the meaning of Chaucer's dream vocabulary. At best one might argue that Macrobius' terms influenced Chaucer's collection of names for dreams in the prologue to The House of Fame.<sup>137</sup> Investigation also indicated that supplementary





proposals critics have offered fail to explain how Chaucer uses the dream words in general. Evidence appeared that Chaucer may have utilized materials from a variety of dream authorities without being bound by any scheme.

Turning away from external references, I proposed additional approaches to Chaucer's dream vocabulary. I surveyed appearances of some words of the basic dream vocabulary ("drem," "dremen," "meten," "sweven") to see what semantic implications they offer beyond that of merely announcing a dream occurrence. Finding that the dream is intimately related to imaginative activity, I surveyed as well Chaucer's uses of the terms "imaginacioun" and "fantasie" to determine what emphases Chaucer gives from the range of complex possibilities. A final semantic study concentrated on immediate verbal associations which Chaucer supplies for terms in the basic dream vocabulary. Recurrent ideas appeared which establish a tripartite pattern of concern. The dream is viewed as something significant (or more exactly, as something of questionable significance), as something experientially vital and as something related to telling.

To get some grasp of the ways Chaucer employs his dream words seemed to me a needed exercise in itself. The study has, I hope, disclosed some significant particularities in Chaucer's handling of the dream. But it also contributes to an understanding of the underlying concept of the dream I seek. Preliminarily, the dream appears as something elusive,



imaginative and of concern in all three of the basic ways I mentioned. The chapter served purposes beyond direct verbal study in other ways. Inevitably, it was necessary to struggle with questions of dream lore and with questions of narrative demands. I attempted to disclose something of the complexity of evidence and speculation necessary for dealing with the dream in Chaucer.

In summarizing interests revealed by the dream vocabulary, I have cut across whatever boundaries separate the dream vision poems from incidental dreams, and in further examination of Chaucer's dreams I again will concentrate on qualities shared. I will, consequently, explore the dream visions as special cases of the dream, reflecting the same cohesive body of related interests as other dreams in Chaucer. To do so is not to deny that Chaucer's dream visions can be approached as representatives of a traditional form, however understood; certain qualities of the poems can only be understood by seeing Chaucer's works in a context of other dream visions. At the same time, exclusive attention to dream vision traditions may tell us more about that tradition than about Chaucer's concept of the dream itself. For what is characteristic in Chaucer, we need as well to see whether the dreams of the dream visions invite the kind of attention appropriate to Chaucer's other dreams.

Chaucer's handling of dream vocabulary indicates that the act of exposing and weighing alternative explanations



is itself a critical conclusion. That is, Chaucer does not present the dream as a tightly restricted, inflexible entity; he calls upon us, I believe, to adjust to particularities and possibilities in each case at hand. Further investigation will confirm that initial impression.





## CHAPTER II

### MEDIEVAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE DREAM

If critics have paid little attention to dream vocabulary, they have paid a great deal more to medieval understanding of dream experiences and dream poetry. Of special importance here are three kinds of proposals about the dream in Chaucer which stem from such critical studies. The first centers on dream lore proper--that is, on the teaching of theoreticians concerned with actual dreams--and its relation to Chaucer's poems in general. The second consists of allegorical treatments of Chaucer's dream vision works and relies for an understanding of the dream vision element in part on literary traditions and in part on dream authorities. The third presents what is taken as the medieval attitude toward dreams as a basis for assigning a particular role to the dream vision frame. By implication each proposal may be understood as a way of defining Chaucer's dream concept.

My purposes in this chapter are several. I want to give an assessment of the critical proposals as they affect the interest of this study. I want also to make some suggestions about certain Chaucerian passages concerned directly with dream lore. Finally, as was the case for the first chapter, I want to use the investigation here to build a context in which to study the dream narratives. It will



help clarify the kind of context I have in mind for the dream narratives and to clarify the special perspective I bring to the critical positions to be discussed if I refer to some useful comments by Clemen on how to relate dream psychology to Chaucer's poems.

Dream psychology in a broad sense is not the only topic of this chapter, but it is the most extensively treated. Whatever final decision one makes about the relevance of dream psychology for reading Chaucer's poems, both common usages of the word "dream" and Chaucer's guidelines, I believe, require coming to terms with it for understanding the dream concept in Chaucer. As I understand Clemen, he advises us not to be distracted from Chaucer's poems by questions of dream psychology, but not to ignore that topic altogether either. On the one hand, Clemen tells us in comments on The Book of the Duchess:

it is not of first importance to ask whether he was himself genuinely interested in the theoretical discussions on the nature of dreams (treated in the poem of The House of Fame) or whether he adopts any definite attitude here.

Rather he explains:

The essential point is that Chaucer saw new poetic and artistic possibilities in the use of the dream.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Clemen's account of the dream's poetic uses makes some manner of reference to dream psychology.

Chaucer, Clemen explains,

links it with reality and with the preceding action, he deliberately uses the illusion inherent in the dream and he portrays his own second self within this dream world. Artistic problems of specific nature thus arose which Chaucer solved in his own way: his transition into the dream-state,



the relation between the dream and reality, the rendering of "dream psychology."<sup>2</sup>

In brief, Clemen brings to bear a complex of questions at once, entailing attention both to esthetic purposes and to psychological ingredients of the poems.

Like Clemen I hope to bring to bear on the dream narratives a complex of interests. But two significant differences appear between our positions. By dealing extensively with actual dream theory, I run the risk of distracting attention from Chaucer's poems. I hope to avoid the worst dangers of doing so by turning discussion of dream psychology and other topics to specified problems in understanding Chaucer's text. The second difference separates my study from most of the critical positions to be considered here. While Clemen directs his comments to the dream vision poems only, I intend to keep in view what is common for Chaucer's incidental dreams and the dreams of the dream vision poems. While each dream account demands individual attention, a single underlying dream concept cannot be said to be present in Chaucer's work unless it is possible to discover an area which incidental dreams and the dreams of dream vision works share. Seeking that area is a concern of the entire study.

#### Curry's Proposals and the Need for Reassessment of Medieval Dream Lore

In resisting reference to dream psychology for understanding Chaucer's poems, Muscatine includes in effect a challenge to critics to say what Chaucer thought actual dreams





were like. We should not expect Chaucer's poems to "coincide with the facts of dreaming," Muscatine tells us, adding parenthetically, "whatever he may have thought them to be."<sup>3</sup> Whether within limits of dream verisimilitude indicated by Muscatine's immediate context or in its broadest implications concerning any facts connected with the dream, the challenge is probably not fully answerable but ought to be taken seriously. Again, not Chaucer's personal beliefs, but the play of awareness in the poems, I take to be the question. This study has attempted to disclose something of what Chaucer says and implies about the dream. Curry's study, I think it is fair to say, aims at disclosing what Chaucer assumes on the basis of medieval thought in general. There has been, to my knowledge, no full census of dream theory, certainly none designed to make it answer Chaucer's specific needs. But I count it of some value to reveal what the problems are by sampling the vast materials even where definite answers may be lacking.

Of those critics who take seriously some reference to the dream of general experience, Curry's has been the most influential. The task, as he sees it, is to explain what medieval theorists understood about the dream on the assumption that Chaucer might both allude to such understanding and adapt his poems to its demands. Having produced an account of treatises hard to acquire and to assess, Curry is widely accepted among Chaucer critics as a trustworthy guide to medieval thought on dreams.<sup>4</sup> I have myself



considerable sympathy for Curry's underlying premise that Chaucer would be interested in utilizing dream psychology in some manner in the dream vision poems as well as in incidental ones. Yet, Curry's findings are, I think, largely misleading.

Among Chaucer's critics, the terms Curry derives from a medieval physician have gained considerable currency.<sup>5</sup> They are the terms on which Curry himself places greatest emphasis, both in assessing medieval thinking and in describing Chaucer's dreams. But Curry's own data cannot be reduced to a classification based on those terms nor can the thought of the Middle Ages be adequately summed up in them. Further I am convinced, the terms cannot be applied to Chaucer's poems in the way Curry wants.

As Curry initially defines the terms, they seem clear enough and unobjectionable. A somnium naturale, he quotes, "'originates in the dominion of bodily complexions and humours.'"<sup>5</sup> A somnium animale "'springs from the great anxiety and perturbation of the waking mind.'"<sup>7</sup> The somnium coeleste "'is brought to pass through impressions made by those celestial minds or intelligences which are said to direct the heavenly bodies in their courses . . . .'"<sup>8</sup> Difficulties arise when Curry describes the somnium animale as somehow true and when he attempts to make it seem that the three terms reveal medieval consensus. His study, Curry tells us, "reveals the astonishing fact that among philosophers, astrologers, medical men, and theologians there are neither



essential differences of opinion nor grounds for controversy" concerning the "origin, classification and significance" of dreams.<sup>9</sup> "There is only," Curry says, "a variety of emphasis."<sup>10</sup> In support of that contention, Curry begins a summary:

Medical men, naturally enough, are interested primarily in the somnium naturale to which they attach significance only as an indication of bodily disturbances, but they are perfectly willing to grant the validity and truth of the somnium coeleste and to a small degree of the somnium animale . . . .<sup>11</sup>

From this point on, Curry's summary is, I think, confusing and misleading. He has insinuated that the triple classification will account for medieval thought on dreams, and his second summary statement is intended to support that position; paraphrases are used for somnium naturale and somnium coeleste, but the system is the same:

philosophers and astronomers are principally concerned with the psychology of the somnium animale, but they readily agree that dreams arising from natural causes are meaningless and that revelations from good spirits are absolutely trustworthy . . . .<sup>12</sup>

There are two immediate difficulties here: Curry has provided no data at all to show agreements of philosophers with this interest, and his data specifically contradict his assertion on astrologers:

Among reputable astrologers we find Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel dividing dreams into three classes: the first is a "vision sent by the All-High God," the second is occasioned by planetary influences, and the third proceeds from the humours of the body.<sup>13</sup>

It is impossible to regard that astrologer, as Curry himself presents him, as being "principally concerned with the psychology of the somnium animale," since the astrologer does







not recognize this category. The astrologer's second and third types seem to correspond with the somnium coeleste and somnium naturale, respectively, but nothing in his scheme stands for origin in "anxiety and perturbation of the waking mind."

As Curry continues, the three-fold scheme breaks down altogether: "and theologians, accepting the conclusions of others regarding the somnium naturale and the somnium animale, devote their attention to the classification and explanation of . . ."<sup>14</sup>--somnia coelestia? No, Curry does not say so and cannot say so. Theologians, he says, are interested in "divinely inspired visions--oracles, revelations, prophecy, ecstasy--which all men claim to be true heralds of coming events."<sup>15</sup> Divinely inspired visions are, of course, not limited to "impressions made by those celestial minds or intelligences which are said to direct the heavenly bodies . . . ."

One would suppose that having reached that point, Curry would abandon pretense that the three-fold scheme covers the whole range of medieval thought about dreams. That, instead, he takes the three terms as a true summary is indicated later in his treatment of the dream visions. Suggesting (this time with the qualification, "without any too great conviction"<sup>16</sup>) that Chaucer would try to model his poems on some type of somnium, Curry offers as the possible candidates only the same three, somnium naturale, somnium animale, and somnium coeleste.<sup>17</sup> It would appear that, for Curry, the



term somnium coeleste stands vaguely for a dream having any spiritual source. The coverage in Curry's own data is much better than Curry's conclusion from the data.

In fact, what Curry discloses is only the most loose and least astonishing agreement. That agreement consists of recognizing as theoretically possible influences on dreams from physiological, psychological and spiritual conditions. It is difficult to think what the alternatives would be, except for a society which rejected any dichotomizing of mind and body or which managed total secularization or total spiritualization of attitude. For the Middle Ages, traditions of Hippocrates and Galen on dreams as diagnostic materials,<sup>18</sup> exploration of the internal senses and belief in the unrestricted power of God to act in human affairs would seem to require at least a general acceptance of such broad theoretical possibilities. But that these broad categories conceal a very real and urgent diversity of views about dreams we may learn from Curry's presentation itself.

We have already seen, in the case of the astrologer, that Curry includes some alternative schema that cannot be reduced to the classification he favors. He includes others as well. The chief theological scheme to which he refers is that of Augustine whose interests extend beyond dreams to visions divorced from any reliance on the imagination and hence divorced from somnia coelestia as well. Further, a major concern of theological thinking is whether good spirits or bad ones influence the dream. Curry points that fact out



as well,<sup>19</sup> but fails to note that it requires at least one more category than his three-fold scheme allows for. If the somnium coeleste has "validity and truth," then it cannot encompass all dreams caused by demons. Since neither somnium naturale nor somnium animale is in itself demon directed, Curry's summary of his own data is incomplete. (If Curry means that all authorities agree about the other causes, but only some acknowledge the influence of demons, he nowhere indicates that thought.)

Not only does Curry include incommensurate schemes, he includes conflicting ones. The point of conflict concerns the claim of truth for dreams of mental anxiety, which, in its broadest implications, is a complex matter. At the moment, I want simply to note that in Curry's own data there are theoretical "grounds for controversy" such as he denies. The essential concern in Curry's treatment of dreams is whether one has "validity as a harbinger of future events."<sup>20</sup> His original source for identifying the somnium animale says that it "'seems to have very little significance, or none at all; it is for the most part an illusion.'"<sup>21</sup> As Curry develops the idea, such an assessment becomes the "small degree" of validity mentioned in his summary;<sup>22</sup> that is, Curry thinks of it positively. Yet the dream of mental anxiety is declared worthless for predictive purposes in the scheme of Macrobius which Curry reviews.<sup>23</sup> And Macrobius' scheme is continued, for instance, in the pseudo-Augustinian work to which Curry refers.<sup>24</sup>





By his own account, then, the theoretical situation is not the monolith Curry claims. For practical purposes, as Curry points out, no claim of agreement can be advanced. "But since it is palpably impossible to determine with any degree of certainty or accuracy what these causes are in any given instance, dream-psychology cannot be called an exact science . . . ," he informs us.<sup>25</sup> Curry reemphasizes that point in explaining grounds for controversy in The Nun's Priest's Tale:

But it is Chaucer, the man of philosophical mind, who is quick to see the practical and almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of determining precisely the nature of any present dream that has not already been proved true or false by the event. With the vision of last night upon the table, how is one to know whether it is merely a somnium naturale, or a somnium animale, or a revelation, or an illusion, or a phantom? Here might be grounds for disagreement.<sup>26</sup>

Aside from the implication that a dream shows its origin merely by proving to be predictive (a point to which I will return), I believe Curry's view of practical difficulties of interpretation is correct, though inadequately explained. But in view of Curry's account of the practical problems, I find his satisfaction with detached theory strange. It does not seem likely that medieval authorities in general would avoid controversy by avoiding applications of their theories.

The degree of accuracy in Curry's presentation would not need to be of concern here, except that it has direct consequences in reading Chaucer--for anyone, at least, who accepts the possibility of relationship between Chaucer's dreams and the general understanding of dreams. One of the consequences concerns interpretation of the prologue of The



House of Fame, others concern application of Curry's basic terms to the dream visions. The prologue of The House of Fame provides among other things, as I take it, a guide to what to look for in further investigation of dream lore. For Curry, that is not so:

No one must suppose, of course, that Chaucer's charmingly avowed ignorance of dreams and their sources, as put forth in the introduction to the House of Fame (1-55), in any way indicates the actual state of his knowledge; his disarming simplicity and confession of inability to understand are merely assumed for literary purposes.<sup>27</sup>

There is something to be said for Curry's view. But since it so obviously depends on Curry's conviction that medieval dream lore was in fact quite easy to understand, I think we need to look for possible alternatives.

Curry is not alone in finding that the surface presentation announces an ignorance that we must see beyond. Koonce, for instance, remarks, "Having proclaimed his 'ignorance,' however, Chaucer at once embarks upon an enumeration of the kinds and causes and dreams which would do justice to the 'grete clerkys' to whom he refers us for authority."<sup>28</sup> It is the narrator's breathless recitation of a torrent of data that gives appearance of such confusion that it seems to invite seeing something more behind it, and Koonce apparently takes it that the narration involves a flat contradiction: the narrator said he knew nothing of dream kind and causes, but proceeds to list them. And the narrator does say:

. . . for I certainly  
ne kan hem noght, ne nevere thinke  
To besily my wyt to swinke,  
To knowe of hir signiffiaunce



The gendres, neyther the distaunce  
 Of tymes of hem, ne the causes,  
 Or why this more then that cause is . . .  
 (HF, 14-20)

while, at the same time, he at least exposes the general possibilities about what dream causes are. But I do not believe that view is fully adequate. If my earlier account of dream terms in the prologue was accurate, the terms really are troublesome. On the other hand, while the narrator suggests that he does not think too hard about certain aspects of dream lore, his emphasis throughout is on his inability to fathom the lore, especially dream causation. His first declaration of difficulty reads: "For hyt is wonder, be the roode,/ To my wyt, what causeth swevenes . . ." (HF, 2f.). To that extent there is no actual illogicality. The narrator does not say that he is unacquainted with possible explanations. Indeed, the trouble is that he is aware of too many explanations; he does not know how to decide among them. It is that decision that he feels must be left to the clerks. And surely, since he has a dream at hand that he is about to narrate, he wonders about its specific cause as well.

Whether Chaucer the man believed that conflicting explanations of dream causation constituted a real difficulty is not my question here. But whether Chaucer makes it appropriate for the reader to be aware that there are difficulties in understanding dreams is my question. If the prologue presents not only the data of dream lore but an attitude about them that could reasonably be adopted, then we may understand something further about The House of Fame prologue







I suggest that a Chaucer listener might have found the recitation amusing up to the point at which he realized that he knew the answers no better than the narrator. At that point, startled to find the narrator's nonsense exposing a truth about his own awareness, he might have found it deeply amusing.

In the light of issues raised by that particular passage of The House of Fame and by Curry's study in general, I want to look afresh at some points of medieval dream lore.<sup>29</sup> Typology is a useful place to begin. J. H. Waszink's study of a tradition of classification is especially instructive in exposing principles affecting attempts to equate different typologies.<sup>30</sup> The work of Chalcidius is Waszink's center of interest, but it lies in a tradition of five-part division of dreams which extends back to Artemidorus and involves Macrobius as well. Commentators, accepting common use of terms by Artemidorus and Macrobius, have attempted to match their systems with that of Chalcidius; Waszink points to deficiencies in equation.

Coincidence of two terms (somnium and visum) between Macrobius and Chalcidius has led some commentators to equate the categories, an exercise paralleling that of Chaucer critics referring to Macrobius. But, Waszink notes, Macrobius' somnium is a predictive type, whereas Chalcidius' somnium is not.<sup>31</sup> Further, Chalcidius' visum is caused by a divine power, while Macrobius' visum is not. Waszink's statement is significant: "Chalcidius' visum [stammt] aus einer göttlichen Kraft



. . . , [ist] also sicher mit Zukunftsschau verbunden. . . ."32

What Waszink implies is that one looks for predictiveness from divine power, not from mental turmoil of the dreamer that Curry includes. Attempts to equate Chalcidius' spectaculum with Macrobius' oraculum bring an interesting discussion of uncertainties in separating dreams from visions. Chalcidius includes spectaculum in his dream classification, even though he specifies that it occurs to one awake.<sup>33</sup> Like Macrobius' oraculum, it has to do with communication from a higher power, but Macrobius' type only occurs while one is asleep. Possibly, Waszink suggests, identification of spectaculum with oraculum can be maintained on grounds that dreams and visions are often treated as equivalents. As evidence, he cites a number of Biblical passages and adds that Philo treats dreams and visions as equivalents in certain commentaries.<sup>34</sup> Another kind of difficulty is revealed in Waszink's further reservation to finding an equivalent for spectaculum. Chalcidius tells us that this type results from the action of coelestis potestas and cites Socrates' demons as an instance of such power. A category which depends on that kind of divine power cannot be identified with one which depends on the God of The Old Testament as a cause, Waszink points out.<sup>35</sup> Here, we are reminded that specific ultimate beliefs enter into dream classification.

Also of immediate interest is the system of causation which emerges by equations which Waszink accepts between Chalcidius' revelatio, admonitio and visum and Philo's three



kinds of dreams.<sup>36</sup> "The first kind of dreams," Philo tells us, "we say to be those in which God originates the movement and invisibly suggests things obscure to us but patent to Himself . . . ."<sup>37</sup> Corresponding to admonitio is the dream "in which the understanding moves in concert with the soul of the Universe and becomes filled with a divinely induced madness, which is permitted to foretell many coming events."<sup>38</sup> For visum, as Waszink makes the equation, Philo has the dream which "arises whenever the soul in sleep, setting itself in motion and agitation of its own accord, becomes frenzied, and with the prescient power due to such inspiration foretells the future."<sup>39</sup> Curry's terms somnium corporale, animale and coeleste take none of these types into account unless (as Curry's summary statement and consequent application to The House of Fame indicates he does) he allows somnium coeleste to cover vaguely all dreams stemming from spiritual influence. Even so, they would, presumably, not include the soul's own ability to prophecy, concerning which Chaucer remarks:

Or yf the soule, of propre kynde;  
 Be so parfit, as men fynde,  
 That yt forwot that ys to come . . .  
(HF, 43-45).

Medieval Arabian philosophers utilized Greek traditions, Simon van den Bergh notes, in attributing prophetic powers to the soul.<sup>40</sup> St. Thomas considers that possibility, but rejects it in favor of such knowledge only through the agency of superior forces:

Such an opinion would be reasonable if we were to admit that the soul receives knowledge by participating in the ideas as the Platonists maintained, because in that case the soul by







its nature would know the universal causes of all effects, and would only be impeded in its knowledge by the body, and hence when withdrawn from the corporeal senses it would know the future.

But since it is connatural to our intellect to know things, not thus, but by receiving its knowledge from the senses; it is not natural for the soul to know the future when withdrawn from the senses: rather does it know the future by the impression of superior spiritual and corporeal causes; of spiritual causes, when by Divine power the human intellect is enlightened through the ministry of the angels, and the phantasms are directed to the knowledge of future events; or, by the influence of demons, when the imagination is moved regarding the future known to the demons, as explained above . . . .<sup>41</sup>

If it is difficult to bring accord among dream typologies having the same number of terms, it is more difficult as the number of terms changes, and there were numerous typologies affecting the Middle Ages. There were three-part typologies influenced by St. Augustine's visiones schema that we already have glanced at. Tertullian has a not entirely clear four-part typology of which the first two causes are demons and God.<sup>42</sup> The third class consists of dreams in which "the soul itself apparently creates for itself from an intense application to special circumstances."<sup>43</sup> The fourth he attributes to "what is purely and simply the ecstatic state and its peculiar conditions."<sup>44</sup> G. S. Brett's comment on the scheme is, I think, helpful; the dreams, he explains, are classed according to their sources which are the act of God, the act of devils, intense application of the mind, or the state of ecstasy.

From this account the soul seems subject to external influence in the first two cases; in the third the ceaseless motion of the soul seems directed by previous habituation; in the fourth the activity is undirected.<sup>45</sup>

It is notable that while Tertullian rejects the idea that no dreams are true, he finds dreams "inflicted on us mainly by



demons" who sometimes make them true and sometimes false, and does not assign either truth or falsity to soul originated dreams of either kind.<sup>46</sup> A somewhat different four-point typology is that offered by St. Thomas in discussing divination. In it, St. Thomas severs the heavenly bodies from intellectual influence that Curry speaks of for somnium coeleste and classes them with the "surrounding air" as a "corporal" cause external to the dreamer.<sup>47</sup> Demons vie with angels serving God's wishes in determining dreams having a spiritual cause external to the dreamer.<sup>48</sup> Inward causes are not those of Tertullian but rather the waking "thoughts and affections" of the dreamer and the humors.<sup>49</sup> Gregory the Great offers a six-part typology, to which I will return later, and Curry includes mention of a two-part typology.<sup>50</sup> I do not wish to deny that someone could reduce these differing typologies to a single scheme which satisfied his own inclinations. But, as we saw in connection with Waszink's discussion, such problems as how to use vocabulary, how many divisions to make, how many qualifications to take into account, would make the sort of universal agreement Curry speaks of most unlikely in principle. It would seem that one might reasonably find medieval dream lore complex and distressing.

Curry acknowledges that theories of causation might be hard to apply in specific cases, but he says little about why that should be so. His only suggestion is that confirmation of the dream prediction by events is needed to tell



whether a dream is of a truthful type. In terms of his own system, the value of confirmation depends on the sense in which the somnium animale is supposed to have some truth. If that means that dreams of that type sometimes are true and sometimes not, then confirmation by events would not distinguish a true somnium animale from a somnium coeleste. If the idea is rather that each somnium animale is true in some part and untrue in some other, partial confirmation by events would distinguish somnium animale from the completely true type. Even so, outside Curry's system, confirmation of the dream prediction by events is not sufficient to establish a cause among those Curry names.

Aristotle offers several alternatives<sup>51</sup> (which are discussed, among others, by Albertus Magnus).<sup>52</sup> Cases of confirmation may be explained, Aristotle tells us, by considering dreams as "causes or signs of events which occur, or else coincidences . . . ." <sup>53</sup> For dreams as signs, Aristotle instances diagnostic use of dreams made possible by the following circumstance:

Impulses occurring in the daytime, if they are not very great and powerful, pass unnoticed because of greater waking impulses. But in the time of sleep the opposite takes place: for then small impulses seem to be great.<sup>54</sup>

Diseases may begin with such consciously overlooked symptoms (as moderns would phrase it). Dream causation seems clear to Aristotle:

for just when you are going to act, or are engaged in some action, or have already completed it, you are often connected with this act and perform it in a vivid dream (the reason being that the impulse arising from the first cause in the daytime has paved the way for it), so conversely impulses in







sleep must often be the first cause of actions in the daytime, because the way has been paved for the intention to do these actions in dreams at night.<sup>55</sup>

The explanation for prediction most frequently applicable, he tells us, is coincidence.<sup>56</sup> Another type of explanation, as in Tertullian's comments, is that demons may bring about true dreams for ultimately deceptive purposes.<sup>57</sup>

If confirmation of prediction by events does not in itself reveal what type a dream is, what does? It seems that the criteria were very hard to establish. Averroes makes an attempt:

The difference between these false forms in sleep and the true forms is that the soul marvels at the true forms and wonders about them and, at times, it awakens and is disturbed as if frightened at the sight thereof and amazed at the spiritual subtlety apparent therein.<sup>58</sup>

Such criteria are, of course, highly subjective and not everyone could be expected to find them satisfactory.

In the setting of the general diversity of data I have presented, a passage remarkably appropriate for The House of Fame prologue appears in the writings of Gregory the Great. St. Gregory lists six kinds of dreams:

They are generated by a full stomach or by an empty one, or by illusions, or by our thoughts combined with illusions, or by revelations or by our thoughts, combined with revelations.<sup>59</sup>

Illusion, it develops, is fashioned by demons ("ab occulto hoste"), while the thoughts of the day may fall in either with demonic or divine guidance.<sup>60</sup> At the moment my concern is with St. Gregory's conclusion. Not as sanguine as Averroes appears about distinguishing the false from the true, St. Gregory suggests that only holy men can manage it safely:



"The saints, however, can distinguish true revelations from the voices and images of illusions through an inner sensitivity."<sup>61</sup> But for the rest of us, St. Gregory's advice is to be wary because of the complexity of dreams:

Seeing, then, that dreams may arise from such a variety of causes, one ought to be very reluctant to put one's faith in them, since it is hard to tell from what source they come.<sup>62</sup>

If we compare St. Gregory's passage with that of the narrator in The House of Fame there are, of course, certain marked differences. Most importantly, there is in St. Gregory's account no suggestion of nonsense in presentation; further, his list of diversities is not as detailed as Chaucer's and his concern is centered specifically on the possibility that demons will use dreams to mislead men. But there are similarities as well. As far as dream lore is concerned, Chaucer's prologue does not, I think, make a simple truth seem complex, as Curry would have it, nor does it merely review what elements of dream lore are (though it does that too). Rather, it seems to me, that within the comic catalog, Chaucer faces the reader with one of the perfectly reasonable alternative attitudes toward dreams. The essential conclusions of St. Gregory and the narrator of the prologue are the same: there is a diversity of dream causes, the diversity creates confusion, the matter should be left to the experts.

Gregory's classification was a highly influential one. Robert Mannyng of Brunne carries a version of it in Handlyng Synne which is attributed specifically to Gregory.<sup>63</sup> Mannyng introduces his classification by declaring:



Beleuē nouzt moche yn no dremys,  
For many bē nat but gleteryng glemys.<sup>64</sup>

His wording at certain points (concerning abstinence, study, too much thought, warning) may be compared with Chaucer's in the proem to Book I of The House of Fame. Mannyng writes:

Sum men dremyn for surfeture,  
þat etyn or drynkyn ouer mesure;  
And sum dremē on veyn þyng  
For ouer mychyl and grete fastyng;  
And sum beyn þe fendes temptacyoun  
þat to þe trow þe ys fals tresoun;  
And sum come of ouer mochyl þouzt  
Of þyng þat men wuld hauē wrouzt;  
And sum beyn goddys pryuyte  
þat he shewyþ to warnē þe;  
And, sum come þurgh grete stody,  
And shewē to þe apertly.<sup>65</sup>

Of these, "Sum beyn to beleue, sum beyn to lete," Mannyng tells us, without distinguishing the true from the false case by case.<sup>66</sup> Chaucer has:

As yf folkys complexions  
Make hem dreme of reflexions;  
Or ellys thus, as other sayn,  
For to gret feblenesse of her brayn,  
By abstinence, or by seknesse,  
Prison, stewe, or gret distresse,  
Or ellys by dysordynaunce  
Of naturel acostumaunce,  
That som man is to curious  
In studye, or melancolyous,  
Or thus, so inly ful of drede,  
That no man may hym bote bede;  
Or elles that devocion  
Of somme, and contemplacion  
Causeth suche dremes ofte;  
Or that the cruel lyf unsofte  
Which these ilke lovers leden  
That hopen over-muche or dreden,  
That purly her impressions  
Causen hem to have visions;  
Or yf that spirites have the myght  
To make folk to dreme a-nyght;  
Or yf the soule, of propre kynde,  
Be so parfit, as men fynde,  
That yt forwot that ys to come,







And that hyt warneth alle and some  
 Of everych of her aventures . . .  
 (HF, 21-47).

What further effect the stand represented by Gregory may have for our reading The House of Fame will be considered in Chapter III.

Curry's specific claim that dreams stemming from mental anxiety are to be regarded as somehow true is, I believe, mistaken. No one, as far as I am aware, has thoroughly explored medieval dream literature, so I cannot deny the possibility that some support for Curry's contention may be found--although, I admit, I would be surprised if it were. But there is no possibility that that particular contention be counted among matters on which medieval authorities agree. Among authorities to whom Curry alludes for some purpose or other and whom he does not exempt from the agreement which includes understanding anxiety dreams as partly true are Averroes, Avicenna and St. Thomas. None of the three is in agreement with that proposal.

The somnium animale in question is not limited to origin in distressing thought; as Curry makes clear it is the dream of "resurgence" of thoughts and emotions of the dreamer. It differs from the dream of the soul in frenzy or ecstasy. While that one too originates with the dreamer, it depends upon the divinely determined spiritual capacity of the soul. The dream Curry speaks of depends upon accidental psychological conditions. In commentary on Aristotle's De Anima, Avicenna begins a dream typology by noting that true



must be distinguished from false: "Non sunt autem omnia somnia vera . . . ." <sup>67</sup> There are dreams called "naturalia" which are consequent upon the power of humors--"quae veniunt ex temperantia virtutum humorum . . . ." <sup>68</sup> There are dreams called "voluntaria" which depend on the thoughts of the day--"hae sunt reliquiae cogitationis diurnae." <sup>69</sup> Of these two types, Avicenna writes: "Sed haec omnia sunt illusiones in somniis." <sup>70</sup> The true dreams are those which come from operations of the celestial realm--"Aliquande vero fiunt ex operationibus caelestium corporum . . . ." <sup>71</sup> After describing true dreams which require the action of celestial powers, in his short account of Aristotle's Parva Naturalia, Averroes turns to two kinds of false dreams. The first is

. . . as result of the activity of the imaginative faculty during sleep in connection with the impressions remaining in the common sense from the external sense-objects and also as a result of the activity of the imaginative faculty in connection with notions deposited in the memorative and cognitive faculties from the same sense-objects . . . . <sup>72</sup>

The second is

. . . a result of the natural desires of the soul, for when the animal soul craves a thing, that is its existence or privation, the imaginative soul will naturally form an imitation of the desired thing in the condition in which it desires it and will obtain an image of the desired thing in the condition in which it desires it. <sup>73</sup>

In the course of discussing divination, St. Thomas says the following:

The inward cause of dreams is twofold: one regards the soul, in so far as those things which have occupied a man's thoughts and affections while awake recur to his imagination while asleep. A suchlike cause of dreams is not a cause of future occurrences, so that dreams of this kind are related accidentally to future occurrences, and if at any time they concur it will be by chance. <sup>74</sup>



In none of these instances is anything that could correspond to procedures Curry describes for the somnium animale to be taken as a mark of truth concerning the future. That dreams could be influenced in some way by thoughts of the dreamer and still be taken as true is another matter. As we saw for St. Gregory, such thoughts could combine with revelation. On the contrary, they could combine with demonic deception as well. Having associated illusion with demons, St. Gregory remarks: "And if, at times, dreams did not proceed from our thoughts as well as from diabolical illusions, the wise man would not have said dreams come with many cares" (Ecclesiastes 5, 2).<sup>75</sup> Clearly, the fact that dreams stem from thought is not the element that determines their truth or falsity, according to St. Gregory. In a general way, I suppose that the dreamer's thoughts may be said to contribute to dreams following prayer or incubatory ritual. But if the resultant dream is totally objective, the contribution is merely that of setting the stage for the dream. Newman's account of the dream vision form entails a dreamer who is generally faced in his waking circumstances with some problem.<sup>76</sup> Clues in individual poems would have to direct our understanding of the extent to which the dream could be understood as an imaginative projection of the thoughts and emotions of the dreamer as against the instruction by higher forces.

Macrobius had the opportunity to say something decisive about the relation between truth value and dream







ingredients accruing from waking preoccupations. The very dream which evoked Macrobius' typology began, Cicero tells us, with a transformation of waking thought. "I dreamt that Africanus was standing before me," Cicero has Scipio say, adding

I believe our discussion was responsible for this, for it frequently happens that our thoughts and conversations react upon us in dream somewhat in the manner of Ennius' reported experiences about Homer, of whom he used to think and speak very often in his waking hours.<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, Macrobius passes by the opportunity without comment. I do not know whether Macrobius ignored Cicero's reference to thoughts of the day or whether, judging from the worthwhile outcome of the dream he understood those thoughts to make no significant contribution, or at least none which would interfere with the effects of higher causes.

Such problems may, of course, be brushed aside to the extent that we are willing to grant the poets independence from external authorities. A poet of any age, I am willing to assume, might use such psychological ingredients as have been discussed if he found them interesting, vivifying, structurally useful or thematically relevant despite the attitude of theoreticians. At the same time, Chaucer does not allow us to ignore the issues. Curry's solution is to accept an authoritative model for Chaucer's poems but to claim that the model declares the practices he finds worthwhile. In Curry's use somnium animale means a dream whose mark of truth is that it originates in waking thoughts and emotions. Thus when (as Curry sees it) Chaucer turns away



from the somnium animale for The House of Fame, he has to find another means of establishing the truth of his dream.<sup>78</sup> Since Curry's understanding of the mental anxiety dream is, to put it as conservatively as possible, a controversial one, somnium animale would be applicable to Chaucer's poems only if it could be shown that Chaucer modeled a dream vision not only on psychological laws but on a special understanding of truth criteria. Curry does not attempt to convince us of that because his assumption of astonishing agreement of medieval authorities does not permit him to see the problem. I conclude that somnium animale is not, strictly speaking, a usable term in Chaucerian criticism as long as the explanation for it relies on Curry's presentation.

Why the problem does not occur to critics who employ Curry's vocabulary, I cannot say; but Robert K. Presson's use of it deserves attention here.<sup>79</sup> In his interesting study, Presson traces literary uses of two kinds of dreams which he calls somnium animale and the prick-of-conscience dream: "The somnium animale," he explains, "shows what thoughts dominate the waking man; the prick-of-conscience dream reveals what the waking man consciously suppresses."<sup>80</sup> Under the influence no doubt of what Curry found the literary cases to present, and seemingly unaware that Curry's point depends both on understanding the somnium animale as partly true and understanding the truth value as predictive, Presson cites Curry as authority for the term, but reexplains it:

Like his predecessor, Shakespeare on more than one occasion has recourse to this kind of dream to make a point; it is



always about a man or man in general; as with Chaucer and all the users, it has no prophetic significance, but has considerable significance in revealing character or general truths about passions and nature.<sup>81</sup>

Presson's use of the term is not open to objections I offered against Curry's use of the term, but neither does it represent what Curry says it originally represented. To stay in touch with the virtues of the type as a literary dream, but to avoid the consideration to which reference to Curry leads us, it would be adequate, I think, to refer to preoccupation dreams.

Judging from a Curry passage he quotes, Presson sought from Curry a perspective on the somnium animale which I have not yet considered. Presson's interest is in Curry's reference to "the stuff of human experience. . ." and to the "resurgence in sleep of the dreamer's waking thoughts, desires, joys, and sorrows."<sup>82</sup> Without minimizing Curry's contribution to the study of medieval dream lore (my quarrel has been with his conclusions from it), I would suggest that this passage is the most useful one from Curry for Chaucer's dream visions. In its context, however, it too is not unobjectionable. Curry says in concluding comments on the dream visions:

By indicating in the introduction and elsewhere to what particular type the poem is to belong and by thus creating a kind of framework, he is able to model the material of his visions according to certain psychological laws.<sup>83</sup>

This comes without Curry's original qualification that he is making a suggestion "without any too great conviction," and some qualifications are needed at this point. Others would,







of course, say that the material of Chaucer's dream visions is modeled on French love visions or on other dream and vision poems. Curry need not deal with such objections, it seems to me, in so far as he confines his attention to whatever psychological layer or elements the poems offer. But he leaves some question about whether that is what he means. Having said Chaucer chooses a psychology and creates the work "as nearly as possible in accordance with the laws of this psychology," he clarifies his meaning to some extent:

This must not be taken to mean that he is in any way using the story-content of his poem to illustrate the scientific development of a dream: on the contrary, he is employing just enough dream psychology of a specific character to give verisimilitude to the story, in which he is primarily interested.<sup>84</sup>

But , Curry concludes his assessment of the usefulness of the somnium types with a statement which seems, nevertheless, to make the psychological model the dominant artistic model for the poem. Following the statement on resurgence of the dreamer's concerns in his dream (as Presson quotes it), Curry states: "Consequently Chaucer's best dream-poems are those which exemplify the psychology of the somnium animale."<sup>85</sup>

However that may be, it is necessary to ask more precisely what the psychological laws and especially the manifestations may be that he assumes Chaucer's poems exhibit. Other than his general description of the resurgence of thought, Curry offers in evidence only references to Kittredge's comments on The Book of the Duchess and to Frederick Tupper's comments on the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. Kittredge reveals elements of the poem which



evoke his own subjective sense of the dream,<sup>86</sup> while Frederick Tupper works with certain Freudian principles of dream-work.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps Kittredge's sense of dreamlikeness and Tupper's modern dream authority do match the workings of the somnium animale, but Curry provides no further data bearing on that point. It may be that Curry supposes preoccupation is enough; that is, given a dreamer's preoccupation according to medieval understanding, it follows that such mechanisms as Kittredge and Tupper refer to will be provoked. If so, Curry has misunderstood Sigmund Freud for whom the dream-work results from a complex of factors other than the direct influence of known waking concerns.<sup>88</sup> In any case, Curry leaves unacknowledged the fact that medieval authorities have not been shown to reveal the psychological laws. In brief, Muscatine's challenge that we disclose what Chaucer took the facts of dreaming to be cannot be answered by noting preoccupation in the poem and referring to Freud or to Kittredge's sense of the dream.

As a consequence of Curry's failure to specify what the laws of the medieval dream types are, his comments on distinctions between The Book of the Duchess together with the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women and the other two dream visions are, I think, nearly impossible to understand. The House of Fame, he insists, "is a pure somnium coeleste,"<sup>89</sup> and that type as a model, he tells us, "can only be used within very narrow limits because its sources and manifestations are hard to understand."<sup>90</sup> The Parliament of Fowls



has a "touch of the somnium coeleste. . . ."91 The Book of the Duchess and the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women he takes to be the best of the dream visions "because in them the poet has developed the stories themselves in accordance with psychological laws of the somnium animale. . . ."92 Since he offers no non-Chaucerian instances at all as somnium coeleste dreams, and since that term is ambiguous at best, it is impossible to check in general whether that type is more narrow in the way Curry means. Within Chaucer's works, one difference between The House of Fame and other dream poems seems clear. The House of Fame supplies very little data about the dreamer's activities preceding the dream; as a result it does not offer the view of transformation of material of waking experience by the dream that Tupper points to in the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. Beyond that special circumstance (which does not apply to The Parliament of Fowls), I am unable to tell what differences Curry has in mind, either from the point of view of medieval or Freudian psychology.

I do not mean to impose on Curry an unfair expectation. Data on the operation of psychological laws in sleep is not easy to come by in ancient and medieval writings, since authorities are more likely to show concern for causes and effects than for dream surfaces. But in the absence of firmer evidence, it would seem that Curry's assertion should be modified. He has neither shown that Chaucer modeled his poems according to certain psychological laws, nor has he







disclosed what those laws are.

Despite my several quarrels with Curry's findings, I share with him the feeling that Chaucer's reader needs to come to terms in some way with dream psychology. To say that is not to claim that Chaucer is a dream psychologist rather than a poet, nor to say that Chaucer modeled his poems in strict conformity to some dream typology or other, nor even to say that Chaucer took dreams seriously. But it seems necessary at least to react to the varied and extensive display of interest in dream matters which the poems offer. I need not here repeat the data from The House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, Troilus and Criseyde and The Nun's Priest's Tale that Curry has set out. Perusal of Chaucer's dream vocabulary already has brought out the kind of extensive interest I mean. It is unusual. The most useful comparison could probably be made among works of French and English authors of Chaucer's period with, for instance, Gower's poems and some elements of Le Roman de la Rose. There is little comparison, on the score of concentration of lines on what the dream is about, with the usual French love vision or with other English works, I believe. Moreover, as a number of critics have felt constrained to notice, there are structural and textual factors of Chaucer's poems which seem to call for some reference to dreams of human experience.<sup>93</sup> This is a question of effects that are more or less important and that are more or less distinctive. But whatever is in the poems deserves to be recognized. I am unable to agree



with Curry about the application of his specific typology. But I would like to follow up a path he indicates, that leads to psychological description of Chaucer's dreams.

Curry offers no reason, I indicated, to suppose that Freudian principles can be called upon to help explain medieval theories. I would like to make a further suggestion on that topic, beginning with a fresh look at the introduction of the dream of The Parliament of Fowls. The narrator proposes a theory of the relevance of preoccupations for dreaming, and relates to the theory an example from his own dream. There is, I believe, a definite movement toward complexity of relationship between the preoccupation and the dream. The passage begins with the idea of simple repetition in the dream of events of the day: "The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,/ To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon. . ." (PF, 99f.). It continues with a suggestion of the dream reflecting active concern, rather than merely memory: "The juge dremeth how his plees been sped. . . ." (PF, 101). It closes with definite indications that the dream may supply imaginatively what is lacking in actuality: "The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;/ The lovere met he hath his lady wonne" (PF, 104f.). And the example carries the complexities of relationship a stage further.

Can I not seyn if that the cause were  
For I hadde red of Afffrican byforn,  
That made me to mete that he stod there . . .  
(PF, 106-108).

In that way the narrator introduces the dramatization and transformation of an element of waking experience in the



dream. The question now is whether theories of the Middle Ages in general could support the use of Freudian principles in describing the kinds of relationship that may be established between waking experience and dreams.

While this study is directed neither to the question of the usefulness of modern dream psychology for understanding medieval theory nor to a history of dream theory as such, materials are at hand for an observation. Hieatt has some remarks about this matter, to which my comments may serve as a supplement. She states:

We do not know of any medieval analysis of the work of the dream that is comparable to modern analyses of dream-work, or any statement that can be construed as referring to the phenomena of condensation and displacement, except for the common acknowledgment that dreams may be meant to be interpreted "by opposites."<sup>94</sup>

I wish to consider here only the descriptive features of Freudian dream-work, not the functions of the unconscious, nor the influences on wishes of the censor, in which Freud embeds them. I do not seek a set of ideas that would correspond to Freud's particular synthesis of materials, nor do I even try to take into account the intricacies of dream-work elements one by one as Freud accounts for them. But it should be possible, I think, to reduce the alienation between Freudian dream-work and medieval thought and thus help place the modern reader on familiar ground.

A dream has a latent content or dream thoughts which become translated by dream-work into the manifest dream, the dream we recount, Freud says.<sup>95</sup> Of first importance for the manifest dream is the factor of condensation; that is, few







images express or represent many ideas. Two points about it concern me here: that condensation makes for multivalent meaning and that images combining disparate elements constitute a special case of it. For John of Salisbury, too, the dream images, as a case of signs in general, have multiple meaning. He would, I think, agree with Freud's declaration:

Even if the solution seems satisfactory and without gaps, the possibility always remains that the dream may have yet another meaning. Strictly speaking, then, it is impossible to determine the amount of condensation.<sup>96</sup>

Salisbury's statement is: "Any particular thing has inherent in it as many meanings of other objects as it has likenesses to them . . ."<sup>97</sup> Consequently, he objects to dream books which rely on a single interpretation:

Surely if ambiguous language is used which lends itself to many interpretations would not one be justly regarded as quite ignorant who, as a result of it, stubbornly makes some particular decision without taking into consideration these meanings?<sup>98</sup>

And Salisbury continues:

Hence the dream interpreter which is inscribed with the name of Daniel is apparently lacking in the weight which truth carries when it allows but one meaning to one thing.<sup>99</sup>

For Freud any dream element may reveal condensation, in so far as it produces a great number of associations, but he thinks as well of particular images combining elements of two or more objects.<sup>100</sup> The imagination in medieval theory, as we saw earlier, includes the function of forming such combinatory figures. Displacement has to do with the differing importance elements have in latent and manifest contexts.<sup>101</sup> For the aspect of displacement of concern here an example is useful in which for the manifest dream "the



central position was occupied by climbing up and down and being up above and down below," while the latent thoughts were concerned with "the dangers of sexual relations with people of an inferior social class."<sup>102</sup> Medieval allegory exhibits the general principle of displacement by taking one thing to mean another. In his discussion of signs, Salisbury sets some limits that I do not suppose Freud would accept, but his statement states the principle of displacement in question. Meanings, Salisbury tells us, depend on the condition that "the more important is never the sign of the less important thing."<sup>103</sup> A third element in dream-work, generally referred to as dramatization, has to do with making abstract thoughts representable--generally, Freud says, by visual images.<sup>104</sup> While Freud and medieval philosophers and theologians might have differing expectations about what abstract thought could be included, they share the understanding that dreams provide embodiments for the abstract. Earlier accounts given of the imagination establish that function for the Middle Ages, and specifically for Chaucer's works. Symbolization for Freud has a broad meaning by which it is associated with condensation and a narrow one in which one thing stands for another in analogy with the dream book practice Salisbury comments on.<sup>105</sup>

What I am proposing is a very moderate use of Freudian principles. To make extensive use of Freud, or some other modern theorist, requires commitment to the full system of psychological thought. Whatever the merit of



making such a commitment is not my concern here: I am at the moment looking simply for appropriate descriptive devices for the texture of Chaucer's poems. The links I have proposed between medieval and modern thought do not in themselves, I should add, necessarily strengthen the particular approach to "realism in the dream visions" that Hieatt proposes, for reasons that I will try to make clear later. At that time I will try to make clear what usefulness I think they have.

In this examination of medieval dream lore I have, in effect, posed Curry's view that theory was simple and agreed upon against the view we find in Chaucer's poems (most notably in the prologue to The House of Fame, in Pandarus' discourse in Troilus and Criseyde and throughout The Nun's Priest's Tale) that theory was diverse and contentious, and found that Chaucer's view is more probable. Curry's view suffers from internal inconsistencies and provides misleading guidance, both concerning the state of medieval dream theory and the expectations we may carry to Chaucer's poems. Curry would have us believe that it would be easy for Chaucer to adopt a concept of the dream common to the Middle Ages. Counter evidence indicates that if Chaucer were to rely on medieval dream theory as a model for dreams in his poems, he would have to choose among conflicting possibilities and would not find the choice easy to make. At the same time, it seems clear, Chaucer knew, by one means or another, a great deal about dream theory and invites our attention to it, as a fascinating problem, in his poems. I attempted to use







discussion of dream theory as a means of commenting on specific passages in Chaucer, of opening up the perspective of the psychological dream as problematic in character and of following up implications of the dream as imaginative act in a way which permits our using familiar Freudian vocabulary for descriptive purposes.

### Allegorical Approaches

A way of avoiding, at least to a large extent, the complexities I have exposed in discussing dream psychology is to turn to allegorical interpretation of Chaucer's poems. But for purposes of my study doing so means, in a sense, turning away from Chaucer's dream concept as well. That is so in at least three respects. I seek a concept which can be derived from Chaucer's works, which unites incidental dreams with the dreams of the dream visions, and which meets general semantic expectations for what the dream is. The allegorists I will review begin outside Chaucer, concern themselves solely with the dream vision form, and rely on exceptional definitions of the dream. Even so, to the extent that their approaches are useful, they provide a kind of understanding of the dream: the dream becomes a device suitable for whatever purposes the dream visions are shown to serve. Chaucer's dream vision poems are complex works capable of sustaining a number of approaches. My own approach is in itself not intended to exclude allegorical ones, but to assert another and, in the ways I indicated,



more comprehensive, account of the dream itself. It would, then, not be appropriate for my undertaking to examine allegorical findings in detail. I want, nevertheless, to consider briefly certain implications of allegorical schemes for study of the dream in Chaucer more closely.

For Sypherd, it seems fair to say, the meaning of the dream is simply that it constitutes a conventional means of announcing that a poem will deal with the topic of courtly love. In denying that Dante is a major influence on The House of Fame, Sypherd sums up what he believes Chaucer's idea of the dream is:

In his attitude toward the dream-motive and in his actual use of it he is much nearer to the conventional love-poets of the day, who invariably fall asleep on a May morning, and in their dreams have strange adventures in their love-service.<sup>106</sup>

Sypherd's study consists of attempts to disclose source materials for notable ingredients of The House of Fame (including the prologue on dreams) and to discuss the importance of adventures in the service of love in determining structure. But for his purpose, there is no need to determine whether the dream (in some sense) exerts an influence throughout the dream visions poems; the whole meaning of the dream is taken up in its being associated with love material.

For that reason I find it difficult to count Sypherd's study as informative about the dream in Chaucer. As Wimsatt sees it, the love adventures Sypherd describes are frequently presented in poems without a dream framework so that the dream vision did not constitute a separate genre for that purpose.<sup>107</sup> J. V. Cunningham abstracts a number of formal



qualities from the dream vision to the exclusion of the dream itself as a means of describing the form of The Canterbury Tales.<sup>108</sup> I conclude that the dream vision form is essentially one thing and the dream essentially another.

Instead of a limited number of French narratives, one may appeal to an indefinitely extended body of dream and vision poems as an explanatory setting for Chaucer's poems. Newman, for instance, cites more than thirty such poems from Hesiod through Latin poems of the beginning of the 12th century, to establish a tradition for poems of the 13th and 14th centuries.<sup>109</sup> Among other works, he includes Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy as a relevant vision work. Referring then to 13th and 14th century poems as well, Newman attempts to abstract a formal description for dream and vision literature, and produces generally helpful comments. He finds that the visionary or dreamer is someone solitary and troubled (he is lost, or confused, or faced with a depressing problem) and that he is depicted as "something of an Everyman."<sup>110</sup> Newman suggests that "the simplest way to characterize the typical dream protagonist is to say that he is a man in need of education, who eventually finds that need answered."<sup>111</sup> Symbolic functions of time and place of dreams are considered, and Newman sometimes refers to dream lore to determine the value of a time or day or season. For the world of the dream, he finds two basic characteristics: that it includes such elements as rivers, mountains and flights, which iconographically mark the dream







as transcendent over the ordinary world of the dreamer, and that it exhibits a tendency he calls encyclopedic, to cover totalities--as somehow including reference to all people, or to the principles of life and death or by including a thorough account of some ultimate value.<sup>112</sup> Since transcendence of the dreamer's ordinary world implies another world, Newman finds the narrative to consist of a pattern of death and rebirth which returns the dreamer to waking experience at a new stage of insight.<sup>113</sup> Newman's basic conclusion is that:

The dream form, in its comprehensiveness, in its apparent transcendence of the ordinary human mode of perception, in its imaginative adaptation of the vision of truth to the capacities of the visionary, in its dual function of speculative and moral transformation, is a secular imitation of the traditional prophetic mode.<sup>114</sup>

I should add at once that the prophecy he has in mind is not necessarily a prediction of the future; he means a revelation of whatever is hidden.<sup>115</sup>

At first look, Newman's approach makes a good deal more contact with the interests of Curry than does Sypherd's. He refers to dream lore, establishes what could be described as psychological problems for narrators and calls attention to the imaginative surface of dreams. Despite these points, Newman's intention appears fundamentally to be opposed to reliance on dream psychology. Of Curry's dream types, Newman could allow only the somnium coeleste (in very loose senses of that term), since he is concerned solely with manifestations of what he calls the "higher dream."<sup>116</sup> Newman develops that concept at some length, but means in



effect revelatory dreams attributable either to God, angels or the prophetic soul of the dreamer. As to the imaginative surface of dreams, Newman has in mind the service of allegorical significance, not the psychological processes of the dreamer. Relying on St. Augustine's scheme of visiones, he explains that the dream poem involves:

the everyday world which the narrator apprehends by means of "corporeal" vision and the purely natural reason; the absolutely incorporeal world which man can behold only by means of a totally "intellectual" vision; and, between these two opposed worlds, a "spiritual" world visible to imaginative (or "spiritual") vision.<sup>117</sup>

The dream world becomes "an allegorical one where images are always integumenta."<sup>118</sup> For Chaucer he connects the higher dream with the narratio fabulosa of Macrobius, which I will consider in a moment.<sup>119</sup>

Our understanding of Chaucer's dream visions considered simply as poems may well be served either by studies relating them to the French love visions or to didactic works in the prophetic mode. For dream study, both approaches may be said at least to suggest bodies of poetic material useful for comparison in considering Chaucer's practices. Additionally, Newman's position suggests a specific question that can be brought to bear on Chaucer's dream narratives: does Chaucer present the dream of the dream visions as having the authority appropriate for the so-called higher dream? Newman's position itself neither stands nor falls with an answer to that question, since his development of theory depends on his understanding of a large number of selected poems and on the authority of Macrobius.



What Newman relies on is not Chaucer's presentation in that respect, but on what he takes to be Chaucer's assumption about the dream. But the question will be a useful one apart from Newman's scheme in helping to disclose Chaucer's characteristic treatment of the dream.

A final allegorical point that I wish to consider concerns the theoretical basis as it involves Macrobius in Newman's scheme and in others. In citing Macrobius' idea of narratio fabulosa, Newman joins Robertson and C. R. Dahlberg.<sup>120</sup> Discussion involves the understanding of one important medieval dream theory and permits a brief look at the two major works which Chaucer translated, at least in part, Le Roman de la Rose and The Consolation of Philosophy. My point of departure is the article by Dahlberg on Le Roman. It presents, I believe, the kind of argument the others have in mind when they associate Chaucer with the narratio fabulosa, and is at any rate the explicit statement of what such allegorists take Macrobius to mean that I have found.

Of concern here is Dahlberg's method of explaining the erotic surface of Le Roman de la Rose. The erotic surface serves allegory, Dahlberg insists, not by presenting personifications which tell us what they mean, but by saying one thing to mean another.<sup>121</sup> Guillaume's reference to Macrobius in the opening lines of the Roman tells us where to look for the relevant theory of the dream as an allegory, Dahlberg explains.<sup>122</sup> From Macrobius, Dahlberg takes two points: that a dream may constitute a narratio fabulosa





serving philosophic ends and that the somnium "conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered."<sup>123</sup> Thus he is able to assert, "The purpose of the concealment is to reveal an art of love, but a philosophic rather than a pornographic art of love."<sup>124</sup>

The erotic surface, as Dahlberg realizes, is not to be got rid of quite so easily, but with the authority of Macrobius established, he feels that it can be done; indeed, it must be done. "It is of course possible to argue that the nearly 22,000 lines are devoted to an elaborate development of an erotic dream," Dahlberg acknowledges.<sup>125</sup> He does not expect anyone to try to realize that possibility even though one recognizes "the clearly sexual symbolism of the poem, particularly in the latter part."<sup>126</sup> But, Dahlberg points out:

. . . if we were to take the sexual symbolism as controlling the form of the poem, as we should if it were primarily a poem of courtly love, we would violate the Macrobian and medieval conception of dream-allegory. Macrobius puts erotic dreams, the sort in which "the lover . . . dreams of possessing his sweetheart," into the category of nightmares, which are "not worth interpreting" . . . .<sup>127</sup>

With his findings, Dahlberg is able to give an interesting account of the unity of the whole Roman. I have no wish to denigrate that account, nor to try to establish that the Roman is nothing but an ingenious celebration of erotic desires, even in Guillaume's section. Newman also sees the Roman as one of the works establishing the meaning of the dream vision for Chaucer, as well as for others, in a manner that agrees with Dahlberg.<sup>128</sup> Once one has the



conclusion, the position carries a great deal of force. But if that approach is to be taken to exclude alternative possibilities, the procedure for reaching the conclusions must be much more convincing than it, in fact, is.

There is no warrant in Macrobius for mingling the insomnium (nightmare) surface with somnium potentialities. Macrobius tells us that dream types may combine, but he himself gives the example only among the three worthwhile types, not across the barrier of the worthless and worthwhile. Dahlberg must be aware of that, but refuses to draw any conclusions from it. Instead, he widens the base of support for understanding the erotic surface in the way he wishes. John of Salisbury, he reminds us, has a theory of multiple meaning which accomodates that surface. "In such a scheme, the sexual symbolism has its place, a place made by one of the kinds of love under consideration and by its relationship to other kinds," since the lesser, as we have already seen, may signify the greater.<sup>129</sup> "John of Salisbury observes," Dahlberg notes, "That 'a thing which is base and obscene in appearance may sometimes conceal an inner substance of the greatest truth.'<sup>130</sup> And of Salisbury's opinion, as with Macrobius, Dahlberg remarks that it is an "attitude, characteristically medieval . . . ."<sup>131</sup> It appears that Dahlberg rests his case on the same kind of assumption that Curry makes: astonishingly in the Middle Ages the mind of men was united or at least the minds of those men who counted were united on important issues. But, as with Curry,



Dahlberg's own evidence does not bear him out. Macrobius specifically rejects precisely what Salisbury accepts. In the course of qualifying the kinds of fiction that he finds usable for his purposes, Macrobius states:

Either the presentation of the plot involves matters that are base and unworthy of divinities and are monstrosities of some sort (as, for example, gods caught in adultery, Saturn cutting off the privy parts of his father Caelus and himself thrown into chains by his son and successor), a type which philosophers prefer to disregard altogether; or else a decent and dignified conception of holy truths, with respectable events and characters, is presented beneath a modest veil of allegory. This is the only type of fiction approved by the philosopher who is prudent in handling sacred matters.<sup>132</sup>

That Macrobius does not mean to limit his strictures to mythological narratives of the behaviour of the gods is clear from the work he is trying to defend. Cicero's Dream of Scipio does not provide narratives about the gods. Surely, what Macrobius means is that for any treatment of sacred matters, decency, dignity, respectability and modesty are to be maintained. If the work does not treat of sacred matters, then it is of no concern to Macrobius at all.

Guillaume makes a rather casual reference to Macrobius:

mes l'en puet ces songes songier  
qui ne sont mie mençongier,  
ainz sont après bien aparent,  
si en puis bien traire a garant  
un auctor qui ot non Macrobes,  
qui ne tint pas songes a lobes,  
ancois escrit l'avision  
qui avint au roi Scypion.<sup>133</sup>

If we take that reference as establishing authority for the kind of allegory Guillaume writes, then we must ask whether he carries out his intention in accordance with that





authority. Dahlberg's failure to show how the surface of Le Roman de la Rose is suitable for that intention leaves the matter in doubt for me. And to the extent that the Roman is important in Newman's structure of authorities, it leaves that proposal in some doubt as well. If one wishes to make Salisbury the basic authority rather than Macrobius, I do not object. I am willing to suppose that medieval writers had choices. But then, one may not appeal to the authority of characteristic medieval thought, as if there were no choices.

If we take Macrobius at his word, he authorizes a very special sort of fiction. Macrobius tries to meet the objection that "philosophers should refrain from using fiction since no kind of fiction has a place with those who profess to tell the truth."<sup>134</sup> Philosophy, answers Macrobius, distinguishes among kinds of fictions, or fables. Fables "serve two purposes: either merely to gratify the ear or to encourage the reader to good works," he says in beginning the distinctions.<sup>135</sup> "This whole category of fables that promise only to gratify the ear a philosophical treatise avoids and relegates to children's nurseries," he explains.<sup>136</sup> The second group he divides again. "In the first both the setting and plot are fictitious, as in the fables of Aesop . . . ."<sup>137</sup> That type, "with both setting and plot fictitious, is also inappropriate to philosophical treatises."<sup>138</sup> Of the remainder, Macrobius again makes the distinctions based on whether the fictional veil is decent, dignified, respectable and modest, as has already been shown. Even then, there are



restrictions, since the proper fictions must be applied to the proper subjects. Philosophers "employ them when speaking about the Soul, or about spirits having dominion in the lower and upper air, or about gods in general."<sup>139</sup> They do not employ them "when the discussion aspires to treat of the Highest and Supreme of all gods . . . or to treat of Mind or Intellect . . . born from and originating in the Supreme God and embracing the original concepts of things, which are called Ideas . . ."<sup>140</sup> The proper subjects then are conceived as they are conceived of in Neoplatonic philosophy.

No commentator that I am aware of has made use of Macrobius' full system of restrictions in references to the dream as narratio fabulosa. And to try to do so would cast doubt on the width of its applicability. To some degree, at least, Macrobius' sense of narratio fabulosa would seem to apply to Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, once, as Newman does, we agree to waive distinctions between the dream and vision. The Consolation is, to begin with, a philosophic treatise that reflects a number of Neoplatonic concepts. It has all the marks of dignity and decency that Macrobius calls for. The setting provides a modest veil of allegory, with a visit by personified Philosophy to the narrator in prison. The plot, apart from some interplay between the narrator and Philosophy which produces some interest in personality, consists of the sober discourse of Philosophy founded in truth. But to couple the Consolation with, for example, the Parliament of Fowls in which both



setting and plot are fictitious, which includes some undignified fowls and allusions to Venus and Priapus of questionable decency and which, if it serves the purposes of philosophy, does so only indirectly, seems to be to make a use of narratio fabulosa of which Macrobius gives no sign that he would approve. To stop short of full applicability of Macrobius' principles would seem to me to be a quite legitimate practice, but it must be specified. Macrobius' dream typology, for example, splits off rather easily from its context, although Macrobius might not have approved of its being split off. So too does the basic notion that the dream is a fictitious form. So too does the general observation that fictions differ in intention and quality. Guillaume may, for instance, have had any of these points in mind in his brief allusion to Macrobius. It may have been something vaguer, and it may have been something ironic. To make Macrobius' understanding of narratio fabulosa responsible, however, for the structure and intent of a poem would seem to require something more than a casual use of Macrobius by the poet and would certainly require something more than piecemeal demonstration by a critic that the system was that influential.

The position I have discussed which treats the dream as an allegorical device serving lofty and didactic purposes implicates considerations of the general state of medieval aesthetics and the general history of dream poetry which lie outside the purposes of my investigation here. But two







observations are relevant for the study of Chaucer's dreams. Specific description of the dream in Chaucer as narratio fabulosa has a dubious theoretical basis. If, as I believe, Dahlberg's treatment of that concept is the most extensive that critics of medieval poetry have offered, then the theory is either inaccurate in part or inadequately developed. It is always possible that one could describe the dream in Chaucer as narratio fabulosa to some degree or other; but critics have not, as far as I know, made clear the degree. The second observation is that discovery of allegory in Chaucer's poems, of whatever sort, does not in itself exhaust the concept of the dream that goes with the allegory. There are questions to be asked of a more particular nature about the dream in Chaucer than the allegorical approaches provide for. It is with the dream rather than possible allegorical contents of the poems that I am concerned.

### The Dream as Authenticating Device

Both Curry and the allegorists are concerned with the authority of dreams. In brief, but highly pointed comments, Bloomfield concerns himself directly with the credibility dreams may lend to narration. "The dream frame has been much misunderstood," Bloomfield states. "For much of the past, it served to suspend disbelief to obtain credence."<sup>141</sup> What misunderstandings Bloomfield has in mind, I do not know. His view that the dream is an authenticating device for the Middle Ages seems to be widely shared. In a



sense, I am sure that the assertion is true; in the Middle Ages there were many poems that claimed to be dreams and to be true. But the potential for misleading readers in the bald assertion that the dream was an authenticating device is great enough that I think it ought to be rejected in favor of careful qualifications.

Though his article is generally helpful, Bloomfield disappointingly provides no evidence in support of his assertion--evidently regarding the issue as closed. He does describe the conclusions involved. "It is perhaps hard today to think of the dream framework as an authenticating device," Bloomfield states, "but as even a superficial study of dream theory shows, dreams . . . are the bearers of revelation and true."<sup>142</sup> I omitted, for purposes of separate consideration Bloomfield's aside that dreams are true "especially 'in the morning,' that is, late, after the food has been digested."<sup>143</sup> Further, he tells us, "The dream may be fantastic, but it really happened."<sup>144</sup> In that way, it "served to suspend disbelief and to obtain credence."<sup>145</sup> From a somewhat different angle, Bloomfield adds, "The dreamer is also an 'I' so that the basic credibility may be maintained."<sup>146</sup> In support, Bloomfield announces, "A man telling his own dream usually tells the truth."<sup>147</sup> Bloomfield's own summary emphasizes two points: "The dream framework gives us then two authenticating devices per se, the dream itself and an 'I.'"<sup>148</sup> The "I" provides a first-person authentication that is perhaps unnecessary to discuss here, but Bloomfield's



other points implicate relevant dream material.

Bloomfield's reference to the special importance of dreaming at morning is strange in an article directed to Chaucer's poems. Which of Chaucer's dream visions occurs in the morning? I will examine Chaucer's references to time of day in the dream visions in later discussion; at the moment I want simply to note importance of the allusion that Bloomfield seems to overlook. It tells us that not all dreams are equally credible. In fact, as we have already seen, not all dreams are credible to any degree and I am personally unable to see any merit in making the unrestricted assertion that dreams "are the bearers of revelation and true" for any period following Homer and the Old Testament. Dreams are from the gods in Homer, but some are true and some are false.<sup>149</sup> Certainly God may use dreams for revelation, but the Bible also finds some dreams worthless.<sup>150</sup> Dream typologies through the ages were designed not merely to classify dreams, but to permit the true to stand out against the false. Since Bloomfield knows these prominent facts, it must be the case that he means something other than he says.

We could suppose that Bloomfield means to say medieval readers had the habit of thinking of dreams as true since there were so many dream poems claiming to be true. But he specifies that it is "dream theory" which supports his view. My guess is that Bloomfield means to say no more than that in the Middle Ages there was widespread belief in dreams as revelations from above and that fact marks a contrast with







beliefs of our secularized age. For that reason, he warns that it is difficult for men of today to understand the authenticating use of the dream. Content with that rough point, Bloomfield thinks, at least so I guess, that careful qualifications would serve no useful purpose. But the qualifications do count if we want to stay in touch with the energies of medieval poetry, especially Chaucer's. I do not know what full statistics would show, but it is clear that one usual and significant practice of medieval poets was to include some comment in their poems about the reliability of dreams. In so far as they did so, medieval poets did not treat the dream as an authenticating device per se; they treated it as a device which itself required authentication. That practice, from which Bloomfield's presentation distracts attention, makes the handling of the dream's own credibility part of our overall experience with the poem--again, especially for Chaucer, as I will show in later discussion.

While the topic of legitimizing the dream itself involves more than direct claims (it involves circumstances surrounding dreams and qualities of the narrative itself), for the issue at hand a few instances of what poets say about dreams in their poems will suffice. Nicole de Margival is content to tell us that he has heard dreams are true sometimes:

j'ai oï des m'enfance  
Que songe sont bien demonstrance,  
Aucune fois, de verité;

for that reason he recites his dream ("Por ce mes mos ai recité").<sup>151</sup> The author of "Le Fablel dou Dieu d'Amors," on



the other hand, wishes to tell his dream even though he does not know whether it is true ("Ne sai a dire se chou est voirs u non").<sup>152</sup> Two dreams follow, without the poet awakening.<sup>153</sup> At the end, the poet decides that the dream lied: "Molt fui dolans que songes me menti."<sup>154</sup> Guillaume de Lorris begins Le Roman de la Rose by acknowledging that men quarrel about the truthfulness of dreams: "Aucunes genz dient qu'en songes/ n'a se fables non et mençonges . . . ."<sup>155</sup> There is, however, Macrobius' authority for believing in some. As to his own dream, Guillaume explains that it all came true ("mes em ce songe onques riens n'ot/ qui tretot avenu ne soit/ si con li songes recensoit").<sup>156</sup> Langland does not claim fulfilment of his dream, but finds reason to think it deserves consideration. Like de Lorris, he is aware that dreams are controversial:

Ac men setten nat by songewarie. men seen hit ofte faile,  
Caton counteth hit at nought-and canonistres at lasse.<sup>157</sup>

The Bible, however, tells of certain true dreams, Langland says, recounting experiences of Daniel and Joseph of the Old Testament. "Al this maketh me on meteles to studie," he concludes.<sup>158</sup> I have merely touched on this subject which could well be explored at length; but the instances serve, I think to clarify the principle: to say that the dream frame authenticates per se is a misleading oversimplification.

Another aspect of Bloomfield's presentation which needs clarification is his assertion that "the dream may be fantastic, but it really happened." I understand, of course



that Bloomfield means that the dream is to be taken as if it really happened, within the confines of the intriguing game of suspending disbelief for a literary work. He here is speaking of the "dream frame," but since the understanding of the literary dream depends on dream theory in Bloomfield's presentation, it may be advisable to look briefly at both dreams.

For the dream as an entity of mankind's sleeping experiences, there is, I would suppose, always an element of objectivity in so far as the dream comes without wilful summons and is unrecognized as a dream during its occurrence.<sup>159</sup> That objectivity may lead or have led some people at some time to believe that dreams really happen. But it is not possible to grant more than that for the Middle Ages. It may help clarify matters to remove an ambiguity in the word "fantastic." Bloomfield presumably uses it non-technically to mean no more than extraordinary. Technically speaking, for medieval theorists in general--at least so the samples presented here concerning fantasy or imagination and the dream would suggest--one must choose between the fantastic and the real. A dream could be counted as fantastic and revelatory, for instance, without being counted as fantastic and real. Some comments in Jean de Meun's section of Le Roman de la Rose are helpful here. Nature recites a number of typical dreams that follow upon various emotions, ending with the following instances:

Ou songent ou gibet ou corde,  
se li cueurs par jour leur recorde,







Ou queusque choses desplaisanz,  
Qui ne sont mie hors, mais enz.

And Nature continues:

Si recuident il pour veir lores  
Que ces choses seient defores;  
E font de tout ou deul ou feste,  
E tout portent dedenz leur teste,  
Qui les cinc sens ainsinc deceit  
Par les fantosmes qu'el receit.<sup>160</sup>

Earlier, Nature had suggested that for one in such a condition it is "Si con li sen comun someillent/ E tuit li particulier veillent."<sup>161</sup>

For the literary dream, objectivity in such a psychologically describable sense, may remain. But there may be another sort of objectivity in literary presentation which excludes psychological description. It exists, I would suppose, as part of a continuum from the completely objective to the fully subjective or psychological. For purposes here, it may suffice to point to a few stages in that continuum. Baake tells us that a dream in Guy of Warwick is unique in presenting an experience of the soul apart from the body.<sup>162</sup> The incident is as follows: as his companion slumbers, Guy sees a creature like an ermine emerge from the dreamer's mouth. He sees the creature run into a hole in a hill nearby and return shortly to enter the companion's mouth. The companion on awaking, explains that he has had a dream:

Me boght, y was on a hylle gone  
And y fonde pere a roche of stone:  
Full hyt was of golde redde. . . .<sup>163</sup>

It seemed to the dreamer as well that Sir Guy was with him at the time. The two go to the hill identified in the dream and



indeed find the treasure. If the dream is unique for Middle English, it is in the factors of embodiment of the soul in an animal form and its being objectively seen to go on an adventure. A number of poems present themselves as adventures of the soul, but without objective corroboration they move a degree toward the psychological. In Pearl, for instance, the narrator explains that his spirit traveled on a marvelous adventure while his body slept.<sup>164</sup> That is not enough, I take it, to make the reader believe that the narrator has made a trip to heaven. Rather he has a vision, spiritual and imaginative, that draws on the reader's sense of an objective adventure of the soul. The author of Le Songe Vert is "raviz" in a dream,<sup>165</sup> but his is not precisely an adventure of the soul apart from the body. On the other hand, his dream is objectified by a token remaining from it. Dressed in black, when he falls asleep, the narrator dreams that Venus has his clothes changed to green. He wakes to find himself dressed in green. Georgia Dunham Kelchner provides instances of objective visitations in dreams in Norse literature. The dreamer awakens just in time to see a personage whom he had dreamed about leaving his room.<sup>166</sup> For a final category of objectivity, I want to turn for a moment to Milton, who provides an especially clear example for one medieval principle discussed earlier: that the dream may be created by superior forces making use of the dreamer's imagination. I refer to Eve's dream which is narrated after we are told that angels find Satan:



Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve;  
 Assaying by his Devilish art to reach  
 The Organs of her Fancy, and with them forge  
 Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams. . . .<sup>167</sup>

The author of La Chanson de Roland presumably has the same process in mind, though he does not refer directly to the dreamer's imagination for the "avisiun" of Charlemagne. This time God sends a friendly angel to cause the dream:

Li angles est tute noit a sun chef,  
 Par avisiun li ad anunciét  
 D'une bataille ki encuntre lui ert,  
 Senefiance l'en demustrat mult gref.<sup>168</sup>

In contrast to all objective types is the insomnium from Chaucer's Romance of the Rose previously referred to. The love sick man, explains the god of Love, is subject to such experiences as these:

That thee shal seme, somtyme that nyght,  
 That thou hast hir, that is so bright,  
 Naked bitwene thyne armes there,  
 All sothfastnesse as though it were.  
 Thou shalt make castels thanne in Spayne,  
 And dreme of joye, all but in vayne,  
 And thee deliten of right nought,  
 While thou so slombrest in that thought,  
 That is so swete and delitable,  
 The which, in soth, nys but a fable;  
 For it ne shall no while laste.  
 Thanne shalt thou sighe and wepe faste,  
 And say, "Dere God, what thing is this?  
 My drem is turned all amys,  
 Which was full swete and apparent:  
 But now I wake, it is al shent!"  
 (RR, 2570-84).

In opposing the objective to the psychological, I do not mean, of course, that psychologists find objective dreams uninteresting or inexplicable; nor do I at all mean that the dreams are robbed of metaphoric or symbolic qualities. The opposition and more particularly the continuum linking the





poles is intended simply to point to presentational variations on the involvement of the dreamer's thoughts, emotions and imaginative potentialities in his dream which affect our total experience. These few instances are intended to demonstrate not that Bloomfield's declaration about the dream as fantastic but real is altogether false, but that it is not helpful. It gives us no adequate clue to the resources of medieval thought or poetry. Consequently, it provides no adequate standards for describing what Chaucer accomplishes with the dream. I have attempted to supply some of these standards.

It is then only in qualified forms that, it seems to me, we can make use of Bloomfield's assertions about the credibility of the dream in medieval thought, about the function of the dream in authenticating narration and about the actuality with which the literary dream is invested.

### Summary

In this section I have examined several methods of reacting to Chaucer's dreams and found them in part misleading, inadequately qualified or insufficiently explained. Such findings are, I think, to be expected for studies which deal simultaneously with the recovery of medieval thought, the realm of dream actuality and the demands of poetry. It is not a subject matter about which it is easy to be clear. The findings also reflect the particular angle of vision from which I have been looking. Studies of the dream in



Chaucer can take any number of directions, since there is not merely a dream but a complete poem making certain structural demands and existing in manifold of literary traditions. Ordinarily, I think it is true to say, the subject of the dream in Chaucer has largely been resolved into the subject of the dream visions of Chaucer. In recent studies both the kind of allegorical awareness Robertson exhibits and the structural concerns of Bronson and Payne on the so-called dream-book-experience formula have been much in evidence. Dream lore, for those who need it, has continued to be mediated largely by Curry's presentation together with use of the authority of Macrobius. For literary traditions, studies have explored a number of instances among the plethora of dream vision poems available from Chaucer's period and earlier. This study has a different aim; it takes seriously the possibility that attention to the general body of dream material in Chaucer's poems will disclose some cohering pattern of interest in the dream itself, in whatever senses dream is meant in the poems. I do not take the dream visions as existing merely in a tradition of dream visions, but suppose that the dream element of the dream visions exists as part of Chaucer's general dream concept as well. In examining the dream visions as well as other dream narratives, Chaucer's language and indications of dream theory, I attempt to extricate that concept. Pursuing that aim requires granting more weight to peculiarities in Chaucer's handling of the dream than need those studies which work from the



standpoint of regularities in medieval theory and literary practice. Consequently, my project has required a fresh examination of some of the findings and assumptions of studies having a different aim.

This section has also served to build up a body of procedures and questions to use in examining the dream narratives. While it is not my intention to offer extended interpretations of the poems as such, the dream concept I am exploring is the operative one that must be seen in poetic context. Such questions as whether the dreams are authenticated, whether they are predictive types, whether they have psychological qualities should not lead us from Chaucer outward to dream theories and traditions merely but should be of some service in the reactions we experience with Chaucer's poems.





### CHAPTER III

#### CHAUCEER'S DREAM NARRATIVES

Concerning dreams and poems and Chaucer's dreams, it is, as we have seen, very hard to generalize. But the one generalization about Chaucer's dream narratives that holds without exception leads, I believe, to the core of Chaucer's concept of the dream. The generalization is awkward to express but perfectly clear in substance: all of the dream narratives in Chaucer's poems are presented as verbal processes, in a word, as tellings. Two basic conditions of that generalization are that the dream is under the control of poetic telling and that some form of presentation is offered. I want to examine the individual dream narratives with respect to their functions and the complex of considerations I have indicated in earlier sections. At the same time I want to clarify the sense of the basic generalization by establishing at least the major implications of the two factors. The effect of the basic condition of the dreams is not single. Chaucer's poems, I believe it can be said, play off the two factors in various ways, so that now the fact of telling is dominant, now the character of what is told; now the two factors approach fusion, now they are set overtly at odds. Whatever else may be said about the dreams (and I have tried to indicate that there are a great many ways of discussing them)



we cannot, I think, be said to be in touch with Chaucer's concept of the dream itself when we fail to take both factors into account in some way.

I do not wish to suggest that Chaucer is unique in announcing his dreams as tales or as elements of tales. At least to the extent that doing so confounds dream with poem, the practice was widespread. Some variations may be suggested. Boethius does not present the Consolation of Philosophy that way. Boethius, of course, relates to us his experience. He relates it as, so to speak, current event, despite the past tense. He was ruminating over his sorrows when Philosophy appeared to him and began to speak. But Guillaume de Lorris does present his dream in the manner I mean. For de Lorris the dream is a work. He wants to rhyme it pleasantly. He gives it a title internally in the poem. He notes that it makes good subject for the poem--"La matiere est bone et nueve . . . ." <sup>1</sup> Only then does he relate the experience. Machaut ends "La Fonteinne Amoureuse," which includes a dream but is not framed by the dream, by saying, "Dites moy, fu ce bien songié?" <sup>2</sup> He may refer to the dream itself, but he also thus invites us to view the whole poem as the poet's dream. Watriquet de Couvin prays for poetic material and claims his following dream as the result in "Li Dis de l'Arbre Royal." <sup>3</sup> The Pearl poet places relatively little emphasis on the dream as poem, but early lines refer delicately to the matter: "Ȝet þoȝt me neuer so swete a sange/ As styлле stounde let to me stele . . . ." <sup>4</sup> Langland



begins Piers Plowman without the kinds of marking of the dream as told that I refer to, except in the case of C; Passus I has: "And merueylously me mette .as ich may ȝow telle."<sup>5</sup> In late Passus of both B and C the narrator explains that he wrote what he had dreamed.<sup>6</sup> These few representative instances suggest that it was easy for medieval poets to identify dream and poem.

In Chaucer's works it is not always the dream as a poem that is directly in question; it is some manner of telling. Dreams in The Canterbury Tales are for the most part elements of the tales pilgrims tell which are retold by the narrator. In The Legend of Good Women dreams appear in the tales the narrator has been instructed to compose. The dream in the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women is a complex case, but roughly speaking the poet lets us know that he will tell how he came to write the tales and the dream is the explanation provided. For The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame and The Parliament of Fowls there are still more direct markings which can be examined in later discussion. Dreams in Troilus and Criseyde are elements of that story which the narrator explains, in the opening line, that he will tell. The dream in Anelida and Arcite appears in the complaint which Anelida composes to send to Arcite. There are further markings. The dream of Alcyone in The Book of the Duchess is something the narrator reads in a book. Dreams of the man who was informed of his companion's death and of the man who was warned not to





travel by boat appear as exempla which Chauntecleer tells. The dream of Croesus is one of the Monk's tragic exempla. Within the tales of The Legend of Good Women which have them, dreams are told by one character to another for a special purpose. Exceptions to dreams as elements of tales the pilgrims tell in The Canterbury Tales are those dreams which are told by one pilgrim to other pilgrims present (The Summoner's Prologue), with the further complication for the Wife of Bath that the account is of a dream told formerly to someone not present. The Parson proposes a hypothetical instance to discuss dreams of nocturnal pollution. I have not included every instance of telling, but the general characteristics have perhaps been named. I am aware that dreams must be told in order for us to learn about them. And since in the case of The Canterbury Tales the narrator is telling an overall tale of tales, the relationship between the fact of telling and the occurrence of the dream could be more or less coincidental. Nevertheless the effect is that all of the dreams in Chaucer are stamped as tellings; that is part of their being in a way that is not the case for a dream which appears as one incident among others in the course of a narration.

That condition presents a temptation that I would like to describe by generalizing a comment by Muscatine, and to resist. In a passage to which I have alluded before, Muscatine states:



Chaucer's problem is not to make his dream coincide with the facts of dreaming (whatever he may have thought them to be), but rather to inweave it with poetic relevance to his theme; in short, to unite the device with a meaning that it can support.<sup>7</sup>

In his specific context, Muscatine is commenting on The Book of the Duchess as a dream vision and by "facts of dreaming" he has in mind such dreamlike surface qualities as Kittredge describes.<sup>8</sup> The generalization I derive from it is that the problem is not to make the dream coincide with the facts of dreaming (whatever one takes them to be) but rather to make the device serve one's purpose. Both as Muscatine means it in his context and as it appears in the generalization I derive, the assertion is deficient because it is reductive: it assumes that the facts of dreaming are irrelevant or antagonistic to poetic or other purpose. Chaucer's works do not, I think, permit us to support the assertion in either form.

To take the generalized implications first, they allow both for Aeneas' dream account of Dido, which will permit him to leave her, and the Wife of Bath's account to Jankyn, which is designed to attract him to her. For these cases, at least, it seems reasonable to assume that purposes are served by means of what the facts of dreaming are taken to be even though they appeal to different understandings of what may occur in dreams. The accounts must be dreamlike in some manner to be convincing for the needs at hand. The Wife of Bath makes the necessity for that understanding unmistakable. So credible as a dream does the Wife's



account seem to her that she feels she must assure her pilgrim audience that she did not really have the dream: "And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught . . ." (CT, III, 582). And behind the Wife's selfish purpose lies Chaucer's poetic purpose in having her tell the dream.

Certainly it would not be surprising to find a poet making his dream narratives appeal to some sense of the dream of actuality. Macrobius would have understood doing so. He carefully explains that The Dream of Scipio is a fiction and then describes it by means of a scheme useful for the dreams of human experience. Viewed in that way, The Dream of Scipio is basically a somnium, about which Macrobius can say, after a few explanatory comments: "We need not explain further the nature of this dream since everyone knows from experience what it is."<sup>9</sup> Both Macrobius and Salisbury, as we saw earlier, cite lines from Vergil to exemplify another dream category. In De Divinatione the brother of Cicero speaks directly to the question of whether literary dreams appeal to one's sense of the facts of dreaming. When he comes to dreams (ad somnia), Quintus refers to several dream accounts by Greek and Roman poets. The accounts are, he acknowledges, fabulous ("Sint . . . somnia fabularum"), but he insists, these fictions of poets are not distant from usual dreams (Haec . . . ficta . . . a poeta, non absunt . . . a consuetudine somniorum").<sup>10</sup> The difficulty does not lie in principle; it lies in finding a method which serves to describe the evocation of actual





dream experience by literary dreams, and in estimating the importance of such evocation. For Muscatine's specific case, the argument must be both more complex and less certain than it is for the incident in the Wife of Bath's prologue.

Muscatine himself finds that the dream of The Book of the Duchess is used

conventionally and functionally, to exclude those reminders of common life, of business, war, and politics, that would cling to a realistic representation of his subject and smudge the purity of feeling proper to the occasion. It opens to him the ideal landscape that is his setting, the exemplarily polite conversation, the high-courtly narrative, the brilliant and elaborate portraiture, and the lyrical utterances that form the body of the poem.<sup>11</sup>

Except, possibly, for the qualities of praise, nothing in that passage distinguishes The Book of the Duchess from the dream in numerous French love visions, whether or not they use the device of the dream. Some other commentators (including Kittredge and Clemen) have felt that Chaucer's dream visions are closer to dreaming experience in some ways than the usual French love vision. The latter is, within certain limits, the view which will be investigated here, since it is the only one of the two which takes the dream seriously in any of its generally accepted senses. I do not wish to claim that Chaucer's aim is to make his dream coincide with the facts of dreaming and that, consequent upon that aim, differences with the French poems appear. It may be otherwise. It may be that Chaucer's aim is to write his poem, but that his manner of writing brings the poems within the descriptive range of some manner of reference to



dreaming experience in a way that is not true for all love vision poetry. Investigation may make it necessary to conclude that Chaucer rarely presents narratives which call upon any sense of dreaming experience. But I have discovered no theoretical considerations which make such findings a necessity; it is a matter to be looked into.

My proposal for the dream narratives, then, is a simple one. In the course of placing the dreams in poetic context, I will attempt to describe some ways in which Chaucer's dream concept manifests itself in the fact of telling and through the content of telling. I do not mean to rely on specialized or far-fetched understandings of what the dream is; the meanings are publicly available. Whatever else we may think of, we would agree, I assume, that by dream one may refer to some manner of experience during sleep and that one may refer to telling. For the dream as a telling, I have already indicated that Chaucer and medieval poets in general call for that understanding, but I take the underlying idea to be widely shared. For the psychoanalyst, for instance, the dream may be defined as an account. Thus Erik H. Erikson states: "A dream is a verbal report," adding, however, that the report is of "a series of remembered images, mostly visual, which are usually endowed with affect."<sup>12</sup> In a philosophic essay complex in ways quite beyond relevance here, Norman Malcolm in effect severs intrapsychic experience from dreaming altogether, leaving us only with the understanding of a dream as a story told about



something that did not happen in actuality. Malcolm writes, for instance:

What we must say, although it seems paradoxical, is that the concept of dreaming is derived, not from dreaming, but from descriptions of dreams, i.e. from the familiar phenomenon that we call "telling a dream." If after waking from sleep a child tells us that he saw and did and thought various things, none of which could be true, and if his relation of these incidents has spontaneity and no appearance of invention, then we must say to him "It was a dream." We do not question whether he really had a dream or if it merely seems to him that he did.<sup>13</sup>

While one may, of course, wish to restrict "dream" to intra-psycho experience, one need not do so, and Chaucer does not. By setting his dreams in a context of demands made by telling, Chaucer provides them with verbal character. The verbal character in that setting differs from the verbal character of a poetic dream which has no task other than that of capturing qualities of actual dreaming experience; but Chaucer's dreams differ as well, I believe, from poetic accounts which fail to stir our interest in actual dreaming experience. An analogy from Freud may be useful but not complete.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the basic intra-psycho experience of the dream describable by principles of dream-work, there is, Freud explains, a process of revision which itself may begin in sleep with the dreaming reflection that one is having a dream and which brings the dream closer to waking thought processes than it otherwise would be. Revision shapes the dream for presentation of waking thought. The analogy is not complete for Chaucer, but only suggestive, since for Freud the dream could be called a report, but only of actual intra-psycho experience understood in ways







conforming to Freud's general system. In Chaucer, of course, the dream is not actual; furthermore, the dream report may have no event ("actual" in terms of the story) lying behind it, and when it does have, the event may not conform to single theoretical explanations. The dream in Chaucer is more fully a tale than in Freud. But it is not, I believe, a tale that loses all touch with human interest in dreaming experience.

A clarification of intentions here may be provided by a further word on possible uses of dream psychology. For that purpose it will be helpful to look briefly at the procedure used by Hieatt. Hieatt assumes only one meaning of "dream," and she assumes that its nature is known. Her concern, she tells us, is the manner in which medieval dream visions can be said to resemble "real dreams"<sup>15</sup> and her explanation for the "real dream" rests on a selection of modern theorists.<sup>16</sup> Hieatt provides no set of alternative significations, nor does she consider variations in objectivity. Neither does she seem to be aware of the obligations to telling under which Chaucer places his dreams. She is thinking, then, solely of the dream as intra-psychic experience, of a sort familiar to modern theorists.

Within that understanding Hieatt discusses psychological states of dreamers, and mentions such topics as truthfulness of the dream. But her emphasis, I think it is fair to say, is heavily on dream verisimilitude, and her tendency is to underestimate the problematic nature of



describing dream poems as dreamlike. E. R. Dodds argues, rather convincingly, that it is a basic mistake to dismiss all literary dreams as mere convention.<sup>17</sup> But his authority for assessing a literary dream as dreamlike is not at all that which Hieatt uses; Dodds rather points to what he calls "culture-pattern" dreams. These, Dodds explains, as "types of dream-structure which depend on a socially transmitted pattern of belief, and cease to occur when that belief ceases to be entertained."<sup>18</sup> For this study, his most relevant instance is that of Macrobius' oraculum (chrematismos):

the stylisation of the "divine dream" or chrematismos is not purely literary; it is a "culture-pattern" dream . . . and belongs to the religious experience of the people, though poets from Homer downwards have adapted it to their purposes by using it as a literary motif.<sup>19</sup>

The case is adequate to disclose the principle: we have the choice of reinterpreting the surface presentation to disclose that all dreams after all confirm to Freudian or other expectations, or of acknowledging that there is no single "real dream" to which literary dreams may conform.

Within the limits Hieatt sets, disclosing the dreamlike is still a considerable problem. Hieatt herself uncovers a principle governing difficulty, but fails to generalize from it. While Hieatt's lists of dreamlike characteristics are more or less lengthy, they reduce for the most part to the Freudian dream-work principles already discussed.<sup>20</sup> But among these dreamlike characteristics, says Hieatt, are puns--though not in every case. For Chaucer, she finds,



"the puns and word play . . . are just as frequent--if not more so--in his non-dream poetry."<sup>21</sup> For that reason, she believes, "It would . . . seem dangerous to try to attach any specific intention of conveying a dream atmosphere to the use of word play in Chaucer."<sup>22</sup> Hieatt does not count the puns, and it would be difficult to do so. It would be even more difficult, having counted the puns in and out of dream poems, to show that demands of dream verisimilitude accounted for some and not others, rather than demands of the story being told, the character speaking, the tone being employed and so on. But, of course, the same principle holds for each dreamlike characteristic; all of them occur both inside and outside Chaucer's dream poems, and it would be very hard to establish that any of them responded rather to the demands of dream verisimilitude than to such other demands as I indicated. Descriptions in the prologue of The Canterbury Tales, for example, are often highly visual, but Hieatt marks off the "richly visual" as dreamlike.<sup>23</sup> Any tale that can be allegorized (The Nun's Priest's Tale, for instance) will match such displacements and condensations of meaning Hieatt finds for the dream visions since, as she presents it, the dream function is to support allegory.<sup>24</sup> It would be difficult to match the prioress' brooch--Amor vincit omnia--for blending, fusion and double meaning in the dream poems. But this particular topic calls for a study in itself. For Kenneth Burke, Freud's dream-work characteristics are useful for describing poetry in general.<sup>25</sup> For





theorists of the Middle Ages, processes resembling such dream-work, occur through the imagination in and out of dreams.

One possible conclusion is that one has the choice of denying dreamlikeness to the dream poems because they share characteristics with non-dream poems, or of claiming dreamlikeness for the non-dream poems because they share characteristics with the dream poems. Neither Hieatt's theory nor practice solves for us the problem of how to describe the dream narratives as distinctively dreamlike. And considering only the several complicating factors already mentioned, it can also be asserted, at least in one sense, that Hieatt has not solved the problem of providing a unitary explanation to oppose to diverse ones. Her own citations of critics disclose that agreement to apply dream psychology to Chaucer's works does not entail agreement of explanation. Dodds reminds us that the agreement to seek dream verisimilitude does not entail applying what moderns mean by dream psychology.

I do not myself think that the difficulties described make reference to dreamlike qualities altogether useless. Thus far, I have considered the question of dream verisimilitude in isolation. In that respect, I would suppose that, until the problems indicated have been solved, claims that a medieval poem exhibits dream verisimilitude in the modern sense probably ought to be replaced by invitations: a reader might legitimately be asked to consider some quality that



another reader, at least partially influenced by his personal "feel" for the dream, discovers in the poem. But, for purposes of reading Chaucer, dream verisimilitude should, I think, not be isolated. While the presence of elements of dream verisimilitude will remain only more or less probable in any case, they may in certain instances seem more probable as parts of an overall patterning of the dream experience. Ambiguity of the prioress' brooch might well call on someone's dreaming experience, but outside a general setting of concern for the dream, it presumably would not do so as strongly as it would inside such a setting. About dream verisimilitude, as far as I am able to understand the problem, one can only try to make one's ideas consistent with themselves, coherent with one's general presentation and, by specifying grounds for contentions in individual instances, as public as possible.

Discussions of dream narratives offered here will have several points of contact with Hieatt's work. They differ, however, in addition to the more fundamental ways I mentioned, in a relative shift of emphasis from the question of dream verisimilitude to the question of the nature of the total dream experience, and they are not tied directly to modern dream theories. One finds regularly in Chaucer's dreams what can be described in some sense as psychological experience, but I wish to presuppose neither the necessity for psychological experience nor a school of explanation for it. My intention is to vary accounts of



the dream narratives in accordance with the demands I recognize while trying to bring to bear whatever roundness of consideration the study has provided about dreams thus far. My study is not of how Chaucer may have developed his dream concept, but how he left it. For that reason, I will ignore speculations concerning chronology of his works in discussing the dream incidents and narratives. I will follow the order of appearance in Robinson's edition, except for saving the more complex dream vision poems to the end and except for discussing the dreams of The Legend of Good Women after those in The Canterbury Tales. Although the dreams vary in character, importance and function, a similar body of fundamental considerations becomes appropriate at almost any starting point.

### The Canterbury Tales

#### The Knight's Tale

The Knight's Tale makes a good beginning by posing in an acute form the problem of identifying a dream kind. Content in Arcite's dream provides nothing that a modern reader would readily think of as dreamlike. "Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde," the Knight tells us, "Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie,/ Bifor hym stood and bad hym to be murie" (CT, I, 1384-86). Mercury then speaks and the dreamer awakes; nothing more. But considered as a culture-pattern dream the event is decidedly dreamlike. Oracular in Macrobius' sense as developed by Dodds, it has a





literary heritage from Homer.<sup>26</sup> The dream elements are the stylized ones that belong to the type; there are no details which can definitely be identified as stemming from Arcite's own experience. Furthermore the machinery of The Knight's Tale emphasizes the importance of destinal forces over human affairs. But despite these several factors, the dream is not satisfactorily accounted for simply as an oracular dream.

Without drawing any conclusion, A. C. Spearing notes in his edition of the tale: "This vision of Mercury was added to Boccaccio by Chaucer, who generally makes the gods influence the human actions of the story more directly."<sup>27</sup> Instances of more direct action are several, but perhaps the most useful one to cite here is the visionary experience of Emelye in the temple of Diana. Emelye is at prayer when, we are told, "sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte" (CT, I, 2333)--the fire dies down and blood drips from the end of brands. Emelye weeps and "Therwithal Dyane gan appeere" (CT, I, 2344). The goddess gives advice and, at her own pleasure, "made a vanysshynge" (CT, I, 2360). By the end of her experience, Emelye is in an extraordinary state of mind ("astoned," CT, I, 2361). But in its manner of presentation, her experience is fully objective; not so, Arcite's. The Knight does not say that Mercury appeared to Arcite, but that it seemed so to the dreamer. How significant is that fact? We may note first that the dream style does not require it. Concerning dreams in Homer, Erwin Rohde states: "Nie heiBt es bei ihm, wie doch oft bei späteren Dichtern,



daß der Träumende dies und jenes zu sehen 'meinte': was er im Traume wahrnimmt, sind wirklich Gestalten . . . ." <sup>28</sup> For the appearance of Mercury in Chaucer's passage, Robinson cites passages in Claudian and Ovid. <sup>29</sup> In neither case is reference made to the recipient's psychological perception; Mercury's appearance is treated as fully objective. We have found as well that such expressions as "hym thoughte" in Chaucer signal some degree of subjectivization of experience, and the Knight has prepared for a good deal of subjectivity in this case by detailing Arcite's medical conditions. <sup>30</sup> Arcite became love sick for Emelye whom he saw when he was a prisoner of war in Athens, and he continued so after his release and exile from Athens. The Knight tells us:

And in his geere for al the world he ferde,  
 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
 Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,  
 Engendred of humour malencolik,  
 Biforen, in his celle fantastik.  
 And shortly, turned was al up so doun  
 Bothe habit and eek disposicioun  
 Of hym, this woful loveure daun Arcite  
 (CT, I, 1372-79).

It is after a year or two of such suffering that Arcite had his dream.

Precisely why the Knight gives the dream a subjective dimension is open to question. Perhaps he (or Chaucer) wants a degree of ambiguity. Perhaps he wants some counterweight to the prevailing influence of external destinal forces. But one could suggest as well that the Knight wants to incorporate Arcite's wishfulness; for that reason he relates the dream to Arcite's preoccupations and establishes the



contribution of his imaginative perception of an otherwise divine dream. The advice itself which Mercury offers includes a prediction and an irony: "To Athenes shaltou wende,/ Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende" (CT, I, 1392). Since Arcite's lovesickness of course makes him want to be near Emelye in Athens, the dream responds to or even can be said to reveal his own wish. But the "goddess spoken in amphibologies," as Criseyde tells us (TC, IV, 1406). The end of Arcite's woe turns out to be his death rather than the happy life with Emelye he no doubt hoped for.

With respect to plot the function of the dream is to motivate an action that contributes eventually to the catastrophe. It causes Arcite's return to Athens, making possible his later meeting with Palamon and the consequences of battle, death and marriage. If we understand motivation in a broad sense as anything designed to bring about an effect, then, it may be noted, we may call it the favorite function in Chaucer's poems. Prediction appears less often, and when it does, it normally is under the domination of motivation. That is to say the dreams in Chaucer rarely merely foreshadow events; they cause the dreamer to do something, are told to influence a listener's state of mind, or bring about the writing of a poem.

### The Miller's Tale

One may see elements of parody of The Knight's Tale in The Miller's Tale. That parody is not obvious or blatant





enough to adapt a line from Arcite's dream to Absolon's case, but it could: to Absolon's woe is also shapen an end. In any event, The Miller's Tale includes a dream similar to Arcite's in providing motivation for an action that brings on catastrophic consequences and in providing an ironic prediction.

The dandy Absolon has amorous inclinations toward Alison, wife of an aging carpenter, who herself has already chosen another lover. It is of her he thinks when the Miller has him say, "My mouth hath icched al this longe day;/ That is a signe of kysyng atte leeste," and add, "Al nyght me mette eek I was at a feeste" (CT, I, 3682-84). It may be noted that other characters speak of dreaming of something throughout the night; presumably, it presents someone's impression of actual dreaming experience. The type of dream has been called a wish fulfilment,<sup>31</sup> and it does no harm to say so. As a wish, the dream operates through displacement of enjoyment of love by enjoyment of food. The account provides no suggestion of a cause higher than Absolon's wish.

But considering the dream presentation more closely, we should also say that the dream produces the wish. That is where, for the sake of ironic consequences, the emphasis is in telling lies. Having considered his itching mouth and dream, Absolon concludes: "Therefore I wol go slepe an hour or tweye,/ And al the nyght thanne wol I wake and pleye" (CT, I, 3685f.). The night he chooses is the night Alisoun and her lover Nicolas have arranged to be free from the old



carpenter. Duped by Nicolas' intricate plotting, Alisoun's husband is asleep in a tub suspended from the roof, believing that it will provide safety from an impending second Noah's flood. Called to the window by the kiss hungry Absolon, Alisoun takes advantage of the dark,

And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,  
 And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,  
 But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers  
 Ful savourly . . .

(CT, I, 3732-35).

His dream thus thwarted, Absolon attempts the revenge which brings events to a conclusion. Full of disgust at the first kiss, Absolon hopes to talk Alisoun into making the same offer a second time, so that he may apply a heated brand. Instead, Nicolas is the recipient, calls for water which alarms the carpenter who cuts down his tub and neighbors appear to laugh events to a close.

A second dream in The Miller's Tale is that of the husband. We do not learn specific content, only that the carpenter's sleep is troubled. The language assigns the sleep experience to the soul, but there is no question of the released soul seeking spiritual contacts in this case. On the night already spoken of, the carpenter falls asleep "for wery bisynesse" (CT, I, 3643), which may perhaps remind us that dreams follow many cares. One may say that the dream is foreboding but it is not importantly so. The Miller uses his account of it as a means of emphasizing the foolishness of the carpenter. "For travaille of his goost he groneth soore," the Miller explains, "And eft he routeth,



for his heed myslay" (CT, I, 3646f.). The description would seem to be apt for one who is not thinking clearly.

### The Man of Law's Tale

No critical attention seems to have been given to the slight dream reference in The Man of Law's Tale, but it deserves some consideration. The incident is not contained in the primary source for the tale, nor does it appear in John Gower's adaptation of the story.<sup>32</sup> Like the dream of the old man in The Miller's Tale, it is given no specific content; it is merely a troubled state of the psyche. Constance, who is beset by numerous trials, has become subject to an order of exile under the forged signature of her husband, King Alla. It is before the order is executed that the Man of Law, in a mark of empathy such as he is accustomed to show, exclaims:

O my Custance, wel may thy goost have feere,  
And, slepyng, in thy dreem been in penance,  
Whan Donegil cast al this ordinance

(CT, II, 803-5).

Constance does not dream, or does not necessarily dream. The Man of Law is simply saying that a troubled dream would be appropriate under the circumstances; in that sense, the dream is purely a report with no event lying behind it. It is interesting that this dream, so clearly an insomnium by Macrobius' reckoning, is given fully respectful attention by the Man of Law. The dream is not, it is true, turned to outright predictive use. Its major function is to depict





Constance's state of mind or to contribute to atmosphere,  
but in that way it forbodes.

## The Wife of Bath's Tale

The Wife of Bath's dream is a first hand account, doubly told. It was told, the Wife explains to the clerk Jankyn to beguile him ultimately to marriage. Although married still, to her fourth husband at the time, the Wife, nonetheless, was making plans for her next marriage. "I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek/ That hat but oon hole for to sterte to," she explains (CT, III, 572f.). It is told again, to the pilgrims, in the Wife's rambling, bragging, open-hearted, bawdy, touching, funny confession of her marital life and opinions.

The Wife pretends to Jankyn that he "enchanted" her, with a love potion, and that she has dreamed of him. Neither an adventure of the soul nor a divine message, the dream is presented simply as imaginative experience, utilizing only such details as the Wife's life experience would dictate. As a dreaming event and tale it evidences displacement and considerable condensation. To Jankyn the dream offers sex and money which have always occupied the Wife's interests:

And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght,  
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,  
And al my bed was ful of verray blood;  
But yet I hope that he shal do me good,  
For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught  
(CT, III, 577-81).

It also foreshadows the actual violence between the Wife



and Jankyn. When they are married, the Wife finds that Jankyn is fond of reading. That is bad enough in itself since it takes his attention away from the Wife. But worse, he reads moral tales about the sins of women and insists on calling the morals to the Wife's attention. The Wife precipitates the crisis:

And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne  
 To reden on this cursed book al nyght,  
 Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght  
 Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke  
 I with my fest so took hym on the cheke  
 That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun  
 (CT, III, 788-93).

Jankyn strikes back, giving the Wife her partial deafness:

And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,  
 And with his fest he smoot me on the heed,  
 That in the floor I lay as I were deed  
 (CT, III, 794-96).

Her words upon coming out of her swoon tie the incident to the dream:

"O! hastow slayn me, false theef?" I seyde,  
 "And for my land thus hastow mordred me?  
 Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee"  
 (CT, III, 800-802).

And yet, the incident did her good, as the dream indicated:

But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,  
 We fille acorded by us selven two.  
 He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,  
 To han the governance of hous and lond,  
 And of his tonge, and of his hond also;  
 And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.  
 And whan that I hadde gotten unto me,  
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
 And that he seyde, "Myn owene trewe wyf,  
 Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;  
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat"--  
 After that day we hadden never debaat  
 (CT, III, 811-22).

Not merely through its predictiveness, but in its immediate









This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,  
 And God it woot, that it is litel wonder;  
 Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder  
 (CT, III, 1672-74).

Internally considered, the dream type differs from those we have encountered thus far among the narratives. It is a journey of the soul in which the dreamer's spirit is guided to other worlds. I do not wish to suggest that no one dreams of heaven and hell anymore, but the dream type resembles a culture-pattern dream in the sense that accounts of such dreams were widespread in the Middle Ages. It has been suggested, for instance, that this one is an adaptation of one of the visions Caesar of Heisterbach reports.<sup>33</sup> The event is not, I assume, to be understood as a literal occurrence; the dream is at some remove or other from that actual trip taken by the embodied soul we observed in the Guy of Warwick. It is, nevertheless, far from being totally subjective, as an imaginative projection by the dreamer would be; the friar is granted an extraordinary experience, a vision of hell. The dream may be said to have a predictive value, and the Summoner leaves the friar (the friar of the dream and the friar in the audience as well) with that thought:

But natheles, for fere yet he quook,  
 So was the develes ers ay in his mynde,  
 That is his heritage of verray kynde  
 (CT, III, 1704-06).

But it is misleading to try to treat this dream as an entity which takes its life solely from dreams of actual experience. The dreaming experience is thoroughly absorbed



in the Summoner's furious and incredibly coarse, though still funny telling. A friar "ravysshed was to helle/ In spirit ones by a visioun," he explains, and "an angel ladde hym up and doun,/ To shewen hym the peynes that ther were . . ." (CT, III, 1676-79). The whole event is under the direction of God who restores the friar to his senses when the time comes (CT, III, 1702). Biblical dreams alluded to in Chaucer presuppose the activity of God, but in no other dream narrative provided in Chaucer's works is the authority of God directly claimed. (The Summoner's next dream account no doubt implies it). The Summoner wants it known that the vision comes as the highest possible revelation. Inquiring where the friars are in hell, the friar receives this answer from the angel:

Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas! quod he;  
 Shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se  
 Where is the nest of freres in this place!  
 (CT, III, 1689-91).

The angel says no more, nor does the friar report the experience. The Summoner himself must describe the event, for the dream is only nominally the vision of the dreamer; in effect, it is the imaginative projection of the Summoner's mentality:

And er that half a furlong wey of space,  
 Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve,  
 Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve  
 Twenty thousand freres on a route,  
 And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute,  
 And comen agayn as faste as they may gon,  
 And in his ers they crepten everychon  
 (CT, III, 1692-98).

In addition to the prologue, The Summoner's Tale



contains an incident which can be called a dream by virtue of having a term of the basic dream vocabulary ("avisioun") attached to it. I do not myself think that it is meant to be taken as a dream of sleep, but the Middle English Dictionary cites it as an instance of a dream which issues instructions, as if it occurred during sleep.<sup>34</sup> As we saw earlier, the friar speaks of seeing the mother's dead child "born to blisse/ In myn avision . . ." (CT, III, 1857f.). The friar's method of specifying the time ("half an hour/ After his deeth," CT, III, 1856f.), and the fact that the vision is shared ("So dide oure sexteyn and oure fermerer . . .," CT, III, 1859) strongly imply that it is a waking experience.<sup>35</sup>

As a tale the vision is a fictional story designed to ingratiate the friar with the dead child's mother when we take it from the friar's point of view. From the point of view of the Summoner as teller, the vision is designed to characterize the friar as unscrupulous. As a type of vision experience, the vision is not, as I remarked earlier, of a predictive nature, but is an extraordinary perception of something that has occurred.<sup>36</sup>

### The Squire's Tale

The Squire's Tale is in such a state of incompleteness that it is impossible to know exactly what is to become of the dreams in it. The first dream reference is designed by the Squire, perhaps, to reveal rather more about himself





than about the dreamers. It becomes the occasion for revealing a bit of expertness, lofty attitude, a touch of humor on the part of the teller at the expense of the courtiers. After celebrating the visit of a representative from a foreign land bearing strange and magical gifts, King Cambyuskan and his courtiers feel compelled to retire, surfeited and yawning:

The norice of digestioun, the sleep,  
 Gan on hem wynke and bad hem taken keep  
 That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;  
 And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,  
 And seyde that it was tyme to lye adoun,  
 For blood was in his domynacioun  
 (CT, V, 347-52).

What they dreamed is beneath telling, the Squire explains; their dreams are of purely physiological interest:

Hire dremes shul nat now been toold for me;  
 Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,  
 That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge  
 (CT, V, 357-59).

A further use of these dreams would seem to be to provide a contrast with the dream of Canacee. Although I have not found that the term "vision" is distinct from the term "drem" in Chaucer's works, the two events in this case are distinct. I am unable, however, to agree with Dorothy Bethurum who comments, "The visioun is probably Macrobius' prophetic dream."<sup>37</sup> Oddly, that critic herself cites a passage from Troilus and Criseyde which shows that visions (or "avisiouns") may come from mental preoccupation (TC, V, 372-74), but permits the cognation of Chaucer's word with Macrobius' Latin to determine her conclusion. Canacee's



vision is provided with causes which do not suit Macrobius' visio. The causes indicated are vague love interest and the magic properties of the mirror, gift from the King of Arabia and India. Retired early and unencumbered by overindulgence, Canacee sleeps a bit, awakes and reacts to her presents:

For swich a joye she in hir herte took  
 Bothe of hir queynte ryng and hire mirour,  
 That twenty tyme she changed hir colour . . .  
 (CT, V, 368-70).

It is then that "in hire sleep, right for impressioun/ Of hire mirour, she hadde a visioun" (CT, V, 371f.), but no content is provided.<sup>38</sup>

### The Tale of Sir Thopas

With Sir Thopas, we have some dream content. As narrator of the tale, Chaucer has Sir Thopas say,

Me dremed al this nyght, pardee,  
 An elf-queene shal my lemman be  
 And slepe under my goore  
 (CT, VII, 787-89).

The indicated source for the dream is wishful preoccupation under the power of love. "Sire Thopas fil in love-longynge" (CT, VII, 772), we learn, and to introduce his dream, Thopas queries, "What eyleth this love at me/ To bynde me so soore?" (CT, VII, 785f.). As an event, the dream is motivational and affects the plot. It causes Sir Thopas to seek out the elf queen and thereby, disastrously, encounter the giant Olifaunt in the land of fairy. Whether the dream is predictive or not, we cannot know, except by reasoning from the improbability of Thopas winning such a partner.



Robinson suggested that part of the humor lies in having Thopas fall in love with a creature seen only in his dreams.<sup>39</sup> Critics have also pointed out, however, that such love was not infrequent in itself.<sup>40</sup> I would suggest that emphasis in Chaucer's telling is on the incongruous pretension the dream entails. Thus he has Sir Thopas explain:

An elf-queene I love, ywis,  
 For in this world no womman is  
 Worthy to be my make  
     In towne---  
     (CT, VII, 791-93).

The mode of existence of the dream is appropriate as well for stressing Thopas' pretension. The dream is a thought in Sir Thopas' mind, since the method of telling it is to have Sir Thopas think it aloud.

#### The Monk's Tale

Although The Monk's Tale alludes to dreams of Nebuchnezzar, it offers no account of them. In the absence of telling, they will not be considered here. Croesus' dream, however, requires some comment. For the first time among the dream incidents I have dealt with in this section, the dream can be assigned to a specific source. Robinson cites Le Roman de la Rose, 6489ff. which contains the same essential data.<sup>41</sup> In Chaucer, the dream remains, nevertheless, the product of the Monk by being bound with his series of tragic exempla.

Whether Croesus' dream is to be understood as divinely inspired is not certain. What makes it seem so is





the definiteness with which his daughter Phanye speaks and the suddenness, as the Monk's account tells it, with which Fortune executes the prediction she makes. Yet the Monk does not say that it is divinely inspired and nothing in the circumstances requires that it be so. Whether Croesus made his own dream altogether or not, the surface of it is appropriate to his imaginative potentialities, as his interpretation makes us understand. Croesus was, we learn, "so proud and eek so fayn" of his dream that "in vengeance he al his herte sette" against enemies who brought him low before. That Croesus is a proud man is asserted repeatedly from beginning to end of the tale, and the dream surface exhibits him as worthy of the service of gods:

Upon a tree he was, as that hym thoughte,  
 Ther Juppiter hym wessh, bothe bak and syde,  
 And Phebus eek a fair towaille hum broughte  
 To dryn hym with . . .

(CT, VII, 2743-46).

"And therfore wax his pryde," the Monk states. Croesus takes the dream as an objective sign of heavenly favor, but betrays in his reactions that the dream surface dramatizes his self opinion.

Phanye's interpretation may rest on an insight into divine direction. But it could also represent a guess about the fate of a man whose pride does not let him know where to stop his drive for power. Granted the expectation that Croesus will go too far, Phanye's interpretation reflects a common sense judgment:



"The tree," quod she, "the galwes is to meene,  
 And Jupiter bitokneth snow and reyn,  
 And Phebus, with his towaille so clene,  
 Tho been the sonne stremes for to seyn.  
 Thou shalt anhangd be, fader, certeyn;  
 Reyn shal thee wasshe, and sonne shal thee drye"  
 (CT, VII, 2751-56).

In this respect, the account in Le Roman de la Rose is more flexible than the Monk's. The daughter in Le Roman explains:

Fortune ainsinc le peuple venche  
 Dou bobant que vous demenez  
 Come orgueilleus e forsenez.<sup>42</sup>

And Croesus has opportunity to take her warning at heart if he only would. Thomas J. Hatton makes no reference to the version in Le Roman, but that comparison supports the point he makes about the Monk's treatment of Croesus. Both in his account of Croesus and of Balthazar, Hatton points out, the tyrants are given warnings which are ineffective. "The tyrants are warned, they fall," he explains; "The Monk gives them no time or opportunity for alternative behaviour after they receive their warnings."<sup>43</sup> Consequently, for the Monk, "the moral of the tale is 'Beware fortune,' not 'Beware sin'."<sup>44</sup>

### The Nun's Priest's Tale

Concerning The Nun's Priest's Tale, Muscatine remarks, "The tale will betray with laughter any too-solemn scrutiny of its naked argument."<sup>45</sup> Surely that is largely true, and it creates an impossible burden for discussing the dream in The Nun's Priest's Tale. Suppose we start with whether



Chauntecleer's dream was a true prophetic one sent by God? Whether we answer yes, no or maybe, we need to add something like this: you understand that the Nun's Priest made up this story about a cock that was supposed to be able to dream and his wife, so to speak, was convinced that it was the sort that medical doctors--not veterinarians, you understand--would regard as only physiologically meaningful, but the cock said that if she would only read the Bible, pretending, you see, that hens read--that is the Nun's Priest is pretending that the cock thinks . . .; anyway, great heroes receive warning dreams like that; besides this is really the story of Adam and Eve, and it is full of erudition from authorities about the dream that the cock has studied . . . . But it is necessary to begin again, and there is no help for it, discussion is solemn.

Much has been written about the dream in The Nun's Priest's Tale. I want simply to note some of the directions studies have taken, and to add an observation here and there about the kinds of awareness concerning the dream that the tale evinces.

Curry describes the nature of the debate. As he sees it, Pertelote has the better argument, even though it turns out that Chauntecleer is right.<sup>46</sup> But to say how we know Chauntecleer is right is not easy. Pertelote's argument is that dreams in general and this one of Chauntecleer have physiological causes and no predictive value. Chauntecleer cites a number of authorities to prove that dreams may be warnings, though he admits not all are.





"Pertelote's contentions are well founded when the dream is a somnium naturale," Curry states, but "Chauntecleer's claims are undeniable when the vision is a true somnium coeleste."<sup>47</sup> In his loose usage of the term, somnium coeleste, Curry counts the type as one of the "visiones, or divine revelations," explaining:

It is entirely characteristic of Chauntecleer to classify his dream as an "avisoun." Common, ordinary men may experience such dreams as the somnium naturale, or the insomnium or the phantasma, but most of the fulfilled dreams recorded by the authorities have been authentic visiones, or divine revelations granted to famous men, illustrious warriors, mighty kings of nations, prophets, seers. Why should the cock be considered--in his own estimation--less worthy than these to receive an "avisoun"?<sup>48</sup>

The course of Curry's argument is somewhat intricate. "Up until the moment when the dream is shown by the final outcome to be a prophetic vision, one is inclined to agree with Pertelote's diagnosis," Curry states.<sup>49</sup> But at what moment is Chauntecleer's dream shown to be a prophetic vision? Curry does not name it, so I take it he is thinking of the moment of fulfillment of the prediction indicated by the dream--the moment when Chauntecleer is seized by the fox. In that case, Curry has two criteria in mind for authenticating a dream as a prophetic vision: one is, that the dream prediction be fulfilled, another is that it be granted to a member of the class, "Famous men, illustrious warriors, mighty kings of nations, prophets, seers." That fulfillment alone is not a sufficient criterion, Curry insists. Chauntecleer's first two exempla, which tell of dream predictions precisely fulfilled, are not somnia coelestia or



visiones, according to Curry; they "belong to the type somnium animale . . . ." <sup>50</sup> The only grounds Curry suggests for understanding the first two exempla as anything other than revelation comes in a quote from one medieval authority who states,

those visions which may be called celestial are most rare, and are not granted except to great men. But because such are sometimes significant no one ought, therefore, to identify himself with that class of men who persuade themselves that they should put faith in their own somnia naturalia or animalia. <sup>51</sup>

I will comment later on problems Curry's discussion raises about understanding dream lore, but at the moment I want to follow up his suggestion for the dream of Chauntecleer. In what capacity Chauntecleer is to be counted among the great men able to receive a revelation, Curry does not precisely say. Presumably it is in Chauntecleer's capacity as the mocked hero of the story. I do not know whether Curry wants that conclusion, but it seems to follow from his presentation, and, moreover, it is plausible. According to that view, the Nun's Priest arranges a true, revelatory dream for Chauntecleer, just as he arranges a comparison of Chauntecleer as a royal prince (CT, VII, 3184) and arranges allusions to Troy, Carthage and Rome (CT, VII, 3355ff.), for the sake of establishing the mock heroic character of the work.

One may take different approaches to the authentication of the dream. George R. Adams and Bernard S. Levy have tried to work out the implications of exact dating of the dream day. <sup>52</sup> From their perspective, the dream is a



providential warning, as they put it, appropriate for understanding the story as an allegory of the Fall. Their argument, very briefly, is that Friday is both Venus' day and the day that Adam fell, if we follow certain traditions. May 3 is a time both for a pagan erotic festival and the time of finding of the Cross which marked a ceremony overthrowing Venus. They find further that Chauntecleer's fall, under the influence of Venus which made him deny his better judgment about the dream warning in favor of dalliance with Pertelote, occurs within the time interval specified for the fall of Adam in the tradition he relies on.<sup>53</sup>

That various allusions support the perspective of the story as, among other things, the story of the Fall, is quite clear. What is not so clear to me is the integration of the dream itself in that story. The fall, proper, in The Nun's Priest's Tale, would seem to consist of Chauntecleer yielding to the blandishments of the fox. The dates Adams and Levy refer to are introduced for that event, but they are not introduced for the dream. It is only after a definite narrative break that we find reference to May 3 and Friday. The break comes at the conclusion of the debate between Pertelote and Chauntecleer as Chauntecleer calls his wives around him to see the corn he has found. Comments the Nun's Priest: "Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture, / And after wol I telle his aventure" (CT, VII, 3185f.). Then it is that the narrator fixes the date (3187ff.). One possible motive by the Nun's Priest (or by Chaucer) for





withholding the date would be, to put it negatively, to prevent the story from being seen as all of a piece, or, more positively, to assert the play of a variety of dimensions.

Still pursuing the question of authenticity of the dream, we may consider the external timing of it. Chauntecleer's is the only dream in Chaucer's works, I believe, that is unambiguously set at dawning. I cannot help thinking that Judson Boyce Allen is on the right track in explaining that timing. Besides being the prophetic hour, the time points to an irony. Allen's general point is that an allegory of a cock-preacher is present in the tale, but is undercut:

Apparently, Chaucer has provided, in the description of Chauntecleer, a fully elaborated set of clues, which connect him to the exegetical figure of the cock-preacher. At the same time, Chauntecleer behaves in a way which makes the connection, detail by detail, equation by equation, explicitly unprofitable.<sup>54</sup>

One of the means of undercutting is the time of the dream:

The preacher awakens the morally asleep, and announces the day of judgment; the cock is explicitly dreaming through the dawn, and flies down from the beam after it was day (VII, 2882 ff., 3172 ff.).<sup>55</sup>

Finally, I think we must count the dream as a true one for whatever purposes we favor mainly because the Nun's Priest exclaims to Chauntecleer: "Thou wer ful wel ywarned by thy dremes" (CT, VII, 3232), and because he has posited the events as an answer to the debate. As Ralph W. V. Elliot notes,

we read what follows . . . not simply for its own interest, but in the light of the preceding discussion. Whom is the



story going to prove right: Chauntecleer who believes firmly that his dream was a warning of disaster? Or Pertelote, who ascribes it simply to bodily disorders and advises a digestive and a purge?<sup>56</sup>

The character of the dream in itself has been relatively neglected. Hieatt points out that in contrast to the symbolic accounts in other versions of the fox and cock story, this dream is altogether clear. One effect of that clarity, she suggests, is to emphasize the blindness of Chauntecleer in not recognizing the fox as the enemy the dream foretold.<sup>57</sup> But the imaginative nature of the dream has not been commented on, as far as I am aware. As Chauntecleer tells it:

By God, me mette I was in swich meschief  
Right now, that yet myn herte is soore afright.

. . . . .  
Me mette how that I romed up and doun  
Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest  
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest  
Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.  
His colour was bitwixe yellow and reed,  
And tipped was his tayl and bothe his eeris;  
With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heeris;  
His snowte smal, with glowynge eyen tweye.  
Yet of his look for feere almoost I deye . . .

(CT, VII, 2893-2906).

Whether divinely inspired or not, the dream utilizes only the details within the imaginative reach of Chauntecleer. He dreams of his own yard and a creature depicted only by images of color and form. Chauntecleer is shaken by the threatening action of the creature, but he is unable to say what it is. The imaginative apprehension in this case is devoid of the contribution of any judgment which would tell him what the colors and forms constitute. Neither Chauntecleer nor Pertelote makes up for that absence of



judgment shown within the dream. Pertelote reacts primarily to the colors, with little concern for identifying what they belong to; she speaks of:

. . . rede colera, pardee,  
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes  
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,  
Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte . . .

or of "blake beres, or boles blake,/ Or elles blake develes . . ." (CT, VII, 2928-36). Chauntecleer still does not know that the fox is the creature of his dream when he meets him. The dream, then, depicts at the outset a problem of judgment active in various ways throughout the work. As prediction, it foreshadows not merely the general meeting with the fox, but Chauntecleer's inability to recognize an enemy. The style of the dream, in so far as it predicts in a clear way an event that is soon to occur, is that of Macrobius' visio.

Dreams told by Chauntecleer seem to represent a mixture of some sort, but the means we have seen Curry use to distinguish among them are not adequate. A visio, as he develops that concept here, is a dream that turns out to be true and that is offered only to certain classes of men. One difficulty is that in Curry's use, visio is a term taken from theologians, and I find it hard to believe that theologians in general would limit divine revelations to certain men only. Surely God may reveal what he wants to whom he wishes. Instances counter to those Curry suggests may readily be found in the work of Caesar of Heisterbach who employs St. Augustine's system of visiones to tell of revelations to





humble men.<sup>58</sup> My own understanding of medieval criteria for revelatory dreams is that the problem was never solved by publicly verifiable means. Furthermore, if Curry wishes to limit the visio to great men and to identify the visio with the somnium coeleste, it is impossible to understand why, without comment about the status of the narrator of The House of Fame, he classifies that dream as "pure somnium coeleste."<sup>59</sup> The final difficulty is the problem previously considered of knowing what Curry has in mind by partial truth of the somnium animale. The two exempla he refers to here as somnia animalia are, as we see in detail for the first one, altogether true. In connection with these incidents, it appears that Curry distinguishes the somnium coeleste as being altogether and always true from the somnium animale as being either sometimes true or somewhat true. My guess is that Curry is rightly impressed with a sense that Chauntecleer is supporting his case with anything that occurs to him, but is over-zealous in applying his highly dubious scheme of somnia as the explanation.

Chauntecleer's first exemplum is notable in moving from prediction of a future event to disclosing what has already occurred. A traveler separated from his fellow for an overnight's stay dreams that his companion "gan upon hym calle,/ And seyde, 'Allas! for in an oxes stalle/ This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye'"(CT, VII, 3003-05). The dreamer wakes, but ignores the warning and falls asleep again only to repeat the dream. Finally, he dreams as



follows:

. . . his felawe  
 Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, "I am now slawe.  
 Bihoold my bloody woundes depe and wyde!  
 Arys up erly in the morwe tyde,  
 And at the west gate of the toun" quod he,  
 A carte ful of dong ther shaltow se,  
 In which my body is hid ful prively . . ."  
 (CT, VII, 3013-19).

As narrator, Chauntecleer attests that "his dreem he foond  
 ful trewe . . ." (CT, VII, 3024).

In moving from one point to another the dream, or  
 the dream sequence, combines two dream styles. The first is  
 an imaginative depiction of someone in trouble; the second,  
 the visit of a ghost as imaginatively apprehended, to judge  
 from the language.

The style of Chauntecleer's second exemplum is  
 oracular, except that the figure of authority is provided  
 with no identity. The dreamer again is a traveler:

Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,  
 And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,  
 An seyde hym thus: 'If thou tomorwe wende,  
 Thow shalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende  
 (CT, VII, 3079-81).

Both this dream and that of the first traveler are thoroughly  
 unsymbolic. Chauntecleer's next case could be symbolic, but  
 the account is insufficient to let us be sure. St. Kenelm,  
 we learn, "say" his own murder in his dream, but in what  
 manner we do not learn; his nurse is required to "expound"  
 it, however, as if its message were hidden.

Thereafter, Chauntecleer rushes to instances, refer-  
 ring quickly to Macrobius, Daniel and Joseph, Pharaoh, the



Biblical baker and butler and Croesus. His concluding dream is especially appropriate, not in duplicating but in commenting on his own circumstances. Andromacha dreams that Hector will be slain if he goes into battle next day, and she urges him not to go. Like all the dreams Chauntecleer tells, this one is fulfilled when Hector ignores the warning. On the mock heroic level the dream foreshadows Chauntecleer's battle with the fox. But it does something more; it presents the relationship between husband and wife in the way a hero might like to imagine it. The wife has a fearful dream and the husband is too brave to be disturbed by it. Chauntecleer's case is almost exactly the opposite: the husband has a fearful dream and the wife, in effect, is too brave to be disturbed by it. ("I kan nat love a coward, by my feith!", Pertelote exclaims, CT, VII, 2911). But we are free, I think, to suppose that Chauntecleer picks up something of the spirit of Hector, imagining himself, perhaps, in the hero's place, for not many lines later we find him ending the discussion once and for all by declaring: "I diffye bothe sweven and dreem" (CT, VII, 3171).

In all, Chauntecleer's account of dreams tumbles together a variety of dream styles. There are oracular message, visit of the dead, insight; clear dreams and symbolic; dreams affecting the dreamer and dreams affecting someone else. His general account indicates, perhaps, that Chauntecleer does not much care how he wins the argument, as long as he wins. His consequent behaviour indicates that he is content with a victory in principle. Pertelote gives no intellectual answer, but silently has the last word, as Chauntecleer decides to ignore the dream warning and turn





to copulating with her.

### The Parson's Tale

Although the Parson associates dreams with divination in part, his choice of an instance of actual dreaming concerns a wholly non-predictive type. The Parson is concerned about "polucioun," a sin belonging to lechery "that comth in slepyng" from physiological or from psychological conditions (CT, X, 910). When such dreams come from "vileyns thoghtes that been enclosed in mannes mynde whan he gooth to slepe," the Parson explains, they "may nat been withoute synne" (CT, X, 910). I take it that the Parson is speaking of lascivious imaginative preoccupations which extend into dreams.

### Anelida and Arcite

Anelida is not concerned about the possible sinfulness of erotic dreaming, only about its poignance. Anelida is totally devoted to Arcite, but he has become the lover of another. Anelida writes to him of her general suffering, including this account:

And yf I slepe a furlong wey or tweye,  
Then thynketh me that your figure  
Before me stont, clad in asure,  
To profren eft a newe asure  
For to be trewe, and merci me to preye  
(AA, 328-332).

Hieatt remarks that this dream "demonstrates a sort of wishfulfillment in reverse. Suspecting that her lover is false, she dreams that he is emphatically true--and finds



this dream terrifying."<sup>60</sup> On further consideration, Heatt suggests that Anelida "is merely unhappy because of the contrast between the faithful lover of her dreams and the absent one of reality; perhaps her dream is true wish-fulfillment . . . ."<sup>61</sup> The latter, I would think, is closer to being correct. Anelida does not tell us that the dream is terrifying. Rather, she contrasts the sorrows of the day with the pleasures of the night. "For in this world nis creature," she writes, "Wakyng, in more discomfiture/ Then I, ne more sorowe endure" (AA, 325-27). But asleep, she sees her lover as she could wish. She then contrasts for Arcite the pleasure of the dream and the trouble of her waking reality, neither of which he knows:

The longe nyght this wonder sight I drye,  
And on the day for thilke afray I dye,  
And of al this ryght noght, iwis, ye reche  
(AA, 333-35).

Anelida and Arcite is unfinished; whether the dream has further consequences than to help Anelida explain her wishes and her plight is not known.

### The Legend of Good Women

In The Legend of Good Women, "The Legend of Dido" makes reference to three dreams and a waking vision. The first, "And Ector hadde, after his deth, apeered" (LGW, F, 934) is too fleeting for comment here, since it can be known as a dream only through the source in Vergil. Of the two dreams described, one (that related by Aeneas) is of the



divine dream type appearing in The Knight's Tale; the second (that of Dido) is an erotic dream somewhat resembling that of Anelida.

A dimension in the dreams that I have perhaps not yet sufficiently stressed is their ability to disclose what really is on the dreamer's mind. To say that dreams may bring the unconscious to consciousness is unhistorical, but not irrelevant. I do not mean to suggest reducing supernatural influences to the psychological ones of modern understanding; I am referring rather to what the poems present as revealing wishes and concerns of the dreamers. Dido's case may be examined in that respect. Her waking reactions, including her manner of telling the dream, indicate that the dream constitutes a discovery she did not necessarily want to make.

Narration makes it quite clear that Dido's dream is under the influence of love.

That sely Dido hath now swich desyr  
With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele,  
That she hath lost hire hewe, and ek hire hele,

Chaucer tells us (LGW, F, 1157-59). And the moon shines its light as Dido retires to "waketh, walweth, maketh many a breyd,/ As don these lovers, as I have herd seyde" (LGW, F, 116f.). But however erotic, the dream is not merely pleasurable. Dido tells the dream by asking her sister, "what may it be/ That me agasteth in my drem?" (LGW, F, 1171). She does not wait for an answer, because she knows it: "This newe Troyan is so in my thought," she continues.





What aghast she, we are left to surmise, is the slight shock of dream-mediated knowledge that she has already fallen in love. She concludes that "I wolde fayn to hym ywedded be . . ." (LGW, F, 1179).

Hans Rudolf Steiner describes much the same use of the dream in Chaucer's source, but Vergil provides more data than Chaucer on complications arising from Dido's loyalty to her dead husband, Sychaeus. Thus Steiner concludes: "Sie erschrickt erst, als sie sich bewußt wird, was sie geträumt hat und wie wankend (suspensam) sie in ihrer Treue zu Sychaeus geworden ist."<sup>62</sup> As Chaucer presents it, the dream has no overt predictive function; it appears solely to contribute to motivation with respect to the plot.

Lacking explicit involvement of the dreamer's psyche, the dream Aeneas relates is quite objective in the sense Rohde describes for Homer's dreams. Both the soul of one dead and a god visit Aeneas in his sleep, he tells Dido:

"Certes, " quod he, "this nyght my faderes gost  
 Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,  
 And ek Mercurye his message hath presented,  
 That nedes to the conquest of Ytalye  
 My destine is sone for to sayle . . ."  
 (LGW, F, 1295-99).

The dream is then motivational and predictive. In Vergil the dream is real enough in Aeneas' experience, as one of a series of divine directions. Chaucer's account makes it possible to understand as a fictional dream, since his account concentrates on Aeneas' deceptiveness:



This Eneas, that hath so depe yswore,  
 Is wery of his craft withinne a throwe;  
 The hote earnest is al overblowe.  
 And pryvly he doth his shipes dyghte,  
 And shapeth hym to stele away by nyghte  
 (LGW, F, 1285-89).

In any case, the dream is told as a way of providing an excuse for Aeneas to leave. Aeneas assures Dido that the message to depart breaks his heart, but the narrator informs us, "Therwith his false teres out they sterte" (LGW, F, 1301).

The dream of Egistus in "The Legend of Hypermnestra" presumably is similar to that of Aeneas, except the nature of the surface content is not described. Under an agreement with his brother to alternate sharing power over the kingdom, Egistes is eager to be rid of his brother's son. When marriage is arranged between his nephew and his own daughter, Egistes orders her to slit his throat. "For in my dremes it is warned me/ How that my nevew shal my bane be . . .," says Egistes (LGW, F, 2658F.). He tells only what counts to serve his purpose of justifying a murder. Again, the dream serves motivation by means of a prediction, and the plot turns on consequences of the dream. Hypermnestra refuses to commit murder, but instead warns her husband and is herself imprisoned.

### Troilus and Criseyde

Troilus and Criseyde is rich in dreams and visions. Indeed, Troilus' own story is bounded by his initial corporeal sight of Criseyde and his final spiritual vision



of the world. The work is also rich in references to fantasy. In altering Boccaccio's Filostrato, Chaucer increased references to fantasy as well as references to dreams. While it would lead too far from the topic with which I am dealing here to pursue these matters, they provide the most immediately relevant larger context for perspective on the dreams as a whole. In this study I want only to discuss the dreams themselves, but the first instance considered will permit a brief observation about fantasy. (I will cite Filostrato for dream passages only.)

While my study does not concern waking experiences as such, Troilus' fantasy concerning Criseyde may be counted with dreams by virtue of its use of "meten," and for certain purposes it makes a useful beginning. As narrator of Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer explains that after Troilus' first sight of Criseyde he

. . . thought ay on hire so, withouten lette,  
 That as he sat and wook, his spirit mette  
 That he hire saugh a-temple, and al the wise  
 Right of hire look and gan it newe avise  
 (TC, I, 361-64).

It would be easy for Chaucer to write that the body slept while Troilus' spirit was awake. That he does not do so, indicates, I assume, that he wants to describe an ecstatic condition which resembles but does not constitute sleeping experience. The dream is not directly concerned with predictiveness, but rather with Troilus' present state of mind. But the dream raises questions of truth by sounding a note in the motif of fantasy, as Troilus begins to "make a mirour





of his mynde,/ In which he saugh al holly hire figure . . ."  
 (TC, I, 365f.). Troilus has turned the mirror to the realm  
 of deceptions.<sup>64</sup> Still his fantasy may be said to be true  
 to his intentions toward Criseyde in confirming his desire  
 for her. The fantasy motif in Troilus and Criseyde is, I  
 think, touched with ambiguities. In Chaucer in general and  
 specifically in Troilus and Criseyde fantasy carries the  
 threat of illusion; but the people accuse Hector of  
 "fantasies" (TC, IV, 193) for objecting to exchanging  
 Criseyde to the Greeks for Antenor when their own choice  
 means that they welcome a traitor. There is, I think, some  
 manner of give and take between illusion and deceptiveness  
 and superior perception for fantasy activity in general in  
Troilus and Criseyde, including the dreams.

Criseyde's first dream, or dream sequence, is the  
 vague one she reports to Pandarus: "This nyght thrie,/ To  
 goode mot it turne, of you I mette" (TC, II, 89f.).<sup>65</sup>  
 Criseyde greets Pandarus pleasantly and they soon are  
 laughing (TC, II, 99). Criseyde may well mean her reference  
 to the dream as a kind of compliment to Pandarus--that he is  
 in her thoughts. But the dream functions beyond that as  
 dramatic irony in forboding the role Pandarus is to play.  
 For Pandarus has come to win Criseyde's favor for Troilus.

Criseyde's major dream occurs after she has learned  
 of Troilus' suit, but before she has made up her mind con-  
 cerning it. The dream occurs under a number of influences  
 of love:







Criseyde's dream coming at the end of the day she first heard of Troilus' love for her, reveals the resolution of her uncertainty: below the level of conscious and fearful ratiocinations, her heart has already yielded.

The dream has a deeper function in the narrative, however. For it is symbolic of Criseyde's need. Her extremely feminine nature craves the support of a strong, crude virility. The eagle as dream-equivalent for the gentle and idealistic Troilus is at once ironical and ominous. That the dream comes at the end of a day of civilized amenities emphasizes the contrast between Criseyde's life and her need.<sup>67</sup>

Sanford B. Meech notes the transformation of the birds who sing her to sleep into "the king of the birds" of the dream.<sup>68</sup> He comments further:

This climax is true to both Freud and art. The dreamwork achieves wish-fulfillment through combination of experiences of the waking day: the Martian hero of the afternoon is transformed into a creature winged, as is the singer of the evening. Artistically, the eagle which he becomes is a perfect symbol for Troilus--a royal and mighty fowl and, in its whiteness, pure as well as splendid.<sup>69</sup>

It may be added that Chaucer uses the technique we saw in The Wife of Bath's dream of picking up later a verbal detail of the dream. Trying to convince Troilus that his jealousy is unfounded, Criseyde protests her love which recalls the eagle and the implanted plant, in a variant context:

. . . O herte deere,  
 The game, ywys, so ferforth now is gon,  
 That first shal Phebus fallen fro his spere,  
 And everich egle ben the dowves feere,  
 And everi roche out of his place sterte,  
 Er Troilus out of Criseydes herte.  
 Ye ben so depe in-with myn herte grave,  
 That, though I wolde it torne out of thy thought,  
 As wisly verray God my soule save,  
 To dyen in the peyne, I koude nought . . .  
 (TC, III, 1493-1502).

The dream is, then, less a prediction than an imaginative embodiment of Criseyde's decision, true to her wishes and





her intentions--for a time.

Pandarus treats an experience of Troilus as an event of sleep; or rather pretends to do so. In seeking to arouse Criseyde's interest in Troilus Pandarus tells of Troilus' suffering love longing. As Pandarus constructs the scene Troilus lies down in the palace garden by a well, saying "he wolde slepe . . ." (TC, II, 514). Soon, Pandarus explains, Troilus "bigan ful wofully to grone . . ." (TC, II, 518). We are not to suppose that Troilus is asleep; rather that he is awake making his love complaint and that Pandarus overhears it (TC, II, 522-39). But Pandarus as he constructs the story, announces his return to Troilus' side by saying, "'awake, ye slepen al to longe!'" (TC, II, 545).<sup>70</sup> This pretend dream echoes one of Troilus' real dreams later. When Troilus returns from seeing Criseyde off, Troilus turns in his bed "as doth the Ixion in helle . . ." (TC, V, 212), we learn,

And whan he fil in any slomberynges,  
Anon bygynne he sholde for to grone  
(TC, V, 246-48).

The painful but hopeful groaning from love longing that Pandarus reported has now become the painful and despairing groaning associated with love about to be lost. The dream the narrator reports continues:

And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges  
That myghte ben; as, mete he were allone  
In place horrible, makyng ay his mone,  
Or meten that he was amonges alle  
His enemys, and in hire hondes falle<sup>71</sup>  
(TC, V, 246-52).



Curry wants to explain this dream, or dream sequence, away by referring it to physiological causes. He states:

This is not even a respectable somnium animale, however much the mind of Troilus may have been disturbed over the going of Criseyde. In this case he is merely oppressed by the fumes rising from too much melancholy in the blood . . . .<sup>72</sup>

Curry has no adequate grounds for certainty about this matter. One tradition concerning melancholy was that it makes one especially sensitive to visions. Averroes, for instance, remarks:

Some persons have truer dreams and can see them more frequently than others during sleep because of their superiority in this faculty, that is, in the faculty of imagination, and they are the ones who have melancholic, cold and dry mixtures of the humors.<sup>73</sup>

Troilus himself assumes the dream is predictive; he tells Pandarus:

For wele I fele, by my maladie,  
And by my dremes now and yore ago,  
Al certeynly that I mot medes dye  
(TC, V, 316-18).

But if it is predictive, it is so only vaguely. D. W. Robertson, Jr., takes Troilus' dreams, justly enough, as "symbolic revelations of this actual situation . . . ." <sup>74</sup>

Taking a lead from Robert M. Jordan, one might see the dream as a rather vague proof of Criseyde's infidelity in a series of increasingly clear proofs.<sup>75</sup> In Macrobius' scheme it presumably would be classed as an insomnium, but we are on the right track, I think, to reject rigid classification and to see the dream as ambiguously foreboding and otherwise meaningful.

That Troilus' final dream is predictive is unlikely.



Chaucer does not provide exact dating which would show the relationship in time between Troilus' dream and Criseyde's yielding to Diomedes. Meech, however, comments: "As in the Filostrato, of course, this dream did not evidence foreordination, since it came after the mistress had falsed him in intent and perhaps also in act."<sup>76</sup> And Troilus' claim for it is not that it will be fulfilled sometime in the future, but that it has revealed the true state of affairs. Whether the dream is divinely inspired is, no doubt, arguable. Meech finds that "Cassandre's exegesis proves her a seer and, through its convincing wisdom, does much to strengthen the theme of destiny."<sup>77</sup> Heatt, however, has speculated that Troilus could have known of the association before the dream.<sup>78</sup> However that may be, we have Troilus' insistence that the gods sent his dream, but no direct confirmation from the narrator.

In content the dream is imaginatively appropriate to Troilus' jealous state of mind:

. . . in his slep hym thoughte  
 That in a forest faste he welk to wepe  
 For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte;  
 And up and doun as he the forest soughte,  
 He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete,  
 That slepte ayeyn the bryghte sonnes hete.  
 And by this bor, fast in his armes folde,  
 Lay, kysyng ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde,<sup>79</sup>  
 (TC, V, 1234-41).

The dream places total responsibility on Criseyde who is, in it, wantonly aggressive. Nothing within Chaucer's narrative makes it certain that the dream is wholly accurate in that respect, although it projects a possibility in her relationship





to Diomede. Meech calls attention to the antithesis between this dream and Criseyde's major dream:

In Criseyde's dream an eagle attacks her heart as she lies passive; in Troilus' dream the boar, the "supplanting" Diomede, will slumber through the kisses lavished upon it by the unfaithful lady.<sup>80</sup>

Reactions of characters indicate differing methods of interpreting dreams. Cassandre bases her understanding of the central symbol on stories from history associating Diomede, through his family, with the boar. One supposes that the boar is able to mean Diomede because Troilus and Cassandre know that he escorted Criseyde to the Greek side, but in the absence of any such hint by Cassandre, the thought is merely speculation. Pandarus bases his interpretation on similarities inherent in the dream images with other circumstances:

It may so be that it may signifie,  
 Hire fader, which that old is and ek hoor,  
 Ayeyn the sonne lith, o poynt to dye,  
 And she for sorwe gynneth wepe and crie,  
 And kisseth hym, ther he lith on the ground:  
 Thus sholdestow this drem aright expounde!  
 (TC, V, 1283-88).

For Troilus, the dream scene is self-explanatory in the light of his jealous mistrust, even though he knows no specific identification for the boar. The dream, I have suggested, is perhaps unfair to some extent in its appraisal of Criseyde's actions; but seen against Pandarus' insistence that Criseyde will remain true, it represents, nevertheless, superior insight.



The Dream Visions

The dreams so far discussed are not all alike. They differ to some extent in accordance with styles of dreaming experience and they differ in accordance with contextual demands placed on them. But they share certain fundamental characteristics as well. They are verbal processes; each comes to us with the self-reflective awareness of one narrator or other that he is telling a dream--not first of all opening a window to dreaming experience, but relating a story. But the stories are such as Cicero has Quintus describe. Not alien to general human experience, they draw on the reader's sense of what actual dreams are like; in that way they succeed in opening a window to dreaming experience. Not all verbal reports are dreams; Chaucer's are, as we may see, by referring to the way men have spoken about dreams at various times and places. Of these, those closest to the modern sense of dreaming, and most often employed by Chaucer may be called the dreams of psychological experience--reflections and extensions of the dreamer's thoughts, emotions, drives, inclinations.

If Chaucer utilized dream authorities in making his dream accounts, what he most clearly utilized was their descriptions, not their evaluations. If he utilized evaluations, based on causation and effects, he incorporated them as problems, making them part of the play of the reader's experience with possibilities of his poems. This practice contrasts with that of poets who unambiguously guide the



attitude they wish their reader to bring to the dreams.

Gower's prologue to Vox Clamantis, for instance, begins as follows:

Writings of the past contain fit examples for the future, for a thing which has previously been experienced will produce greater faith. Granted their common opinion may hold that dreams contain no grounds for belief,<sup>81</sup> nevertheless, writings from the time of the ancients inform us more reliably to the contrary. What dreams may mean is clear from Daniel, and Joseph's vision in his sleep was not meaningless. Indeed, the good angel, who is the guardian of the inner man always protects him with vigilant love. And granted that sleep may envelope the outer body, the angel visits the interior of the mind and sustains its strength. And often in a vision during sleep he furnishes portents so that the man may better understand the conditions of the time. Hence, I think that the dreams I witnessed at nighttime furnish memorable tokens of a certain occurrence.<sup>82</sup>

For Chaucer, the reader must speculate about what his attitude should be. Of course, I do not know how the poems originated in Chaucer's mind, but by discussing the matter so thoroughly, Chaucer invites the reader to consider the relevance of dream theories in some way to his poems.

Additionally, it should be emphasized, Chaucer's dreams, whatever source one decides they have, are imaginative experiences; that is, they offer images, concrete actions, emotional reactions, dramatizations of thought, not abstract argumentation.<sup>83</sup>

My question now is whether these characteristics of the dream similarly appear in the dream vision poems. The special difficulties of talking about the dream in the dream visions are that the dreams dominate the poems so that we may think of them simply as poems apart from dreams, and that one may describe the function of the dream as serving





the purposes of permitting whatever it is one finds the poems to do. To take some instances, if the poem is referred to an historical occurrence, then one may say Chaucer uses the dream to describe an historical occurrence; if the poem is understood as an elegy, then the dream serves elegaic purposes; if the poem is interpreted by means of four level allegory, then the dream function is to announce a four level allegory; if one concentrates on the narrator's attitude, then the dream becomes a means of ordering his relationship to the poetic subject matter. There should be no pretense then that one is accounting fully for the dream in any single assessment of its function in a dream vision poem. All I hope to accomplish in this discussion is to make sure that the dream as dream, in the complex sense I have tried to develop, is seen to be at work not merely at the start of the poems, but throughout the structuring of the poems. In other words, my effort will not be to explore the potential breadth of Chaucer's handling of dreams in the dream visions, but merely to show that a fundamental concept of the dream is at work in the dream visions as it is in the incidental dreams.

### The Book of the Duchess

The concluding line of The Book of the Duchess is, "This was my sweven; now hit ys doon." To what does "sweven" refer? It refers to the dreaming experience of the narrator from which he has awakened. It refers to the dream section



of the work as a poem; awakening the narrator tells us:

. . . Thys ys so queynt a sweven  
 That I wol, be processe of tyme,  
 Fonde to put this sweven in ryme  
 As I kan best, and that anoon  
 (BD, 1330-33).

And, since the whole poem concludes as the narrator announces that his "sweven" is done, it suggests that the poem as a whole is the dream of the poet. Subject matter, as it may be seen from one perspective, makes identification of dream and poem especially appropriate in this case. The poem is the story of a poet who is enabled by his dream to write a poem.

From the point of view of dreaming experience, what manner of dream is narrated? During the course of this study I have attempted to develop an understanding of the sense in which I mean to ask that question. The question is whether the means of telling the dream entails poetic realization or evocation of some mode or style of dreaming as recognized by men in general at some time. Whatever may appear stands, of course, under poetic control, not merely because Chaucer has written poems, but because he has situated his dreams in relation to telling within the poems. A dream in Chaucer cannot exist merely, for instance, to evoke a sense of such dreamlikeness as modern readers may have in mind. It exists in a network of demands by tellers and listeners and narrative and thematic surroundings and with an additional identity that telling gives it (as a recollection, a confession, an anecdote, a poem). Those circumstances have



analogies with dreams told to analysts, of course; the dream is a report existing in a complex of demands. But not every report can, in any common sense of the term, be called a dream, and not every dream poem can, I think, be said to make use of the same manner of appeal to dreaming experience. For The Book of the Duchess such considerations are acutely necessary because of the critical situation surrounding it.

Critics often quarrel about whether the poem has an aura of what they take to be actual dreams, and the quarrel concerns the relationship between Chaucer's work and poems of the French love vision tradition. But, as far as I am aware, no one has singled out a definite French work to make sure that critics are arguing about the same thing. I want to propose such a contrast, to consider some critical assertions in the light of the example and The Book of the Duchess and to broaden the scope of consideration of The Book of the Duchess as a dream. Any poem that shows distinct contrast could serve. But there is, I think, some merit in risking something similar in general pattern to The Book of the Duchess as a means of highlighting particular dissimilarities.

Wimsatt draws the following parallels between Froissart's Paradys d'Amour and Chaucer's Book of the Duchess:

In both the Paradys and the Duchess the poet is troubled with insomnia and melancholy thoughts, which cause and ensue from his sleeplessness; the thoughts are occasioned by the poet's love and his frustration in pursuit of his love. Each poet prays for sleep to Juno and Morpheus, offering gifts; he thereupon goes to sleep, and is subsequently convinced that he would not have slept if it had not been for these prayers.





Each has a dream which he believes is meaningful, and is awakened by a happening in the dream (in the respective cases, a touch from Plaisance and the sounding of a clock tower). Each poet, as soon as he wakes up, consciously notes that he is in his own bed, and each closes on a professional note with a statement about the poetic material which the dream has provided.<sup>84</sup>

To describe Froissart's poem, I excerpt some comments by W. H. French which he believes (wrongly, I feel sure) can be applied to "all the visions that have come down to us . . .":

the human characters in them behave according to convention, pursue a definite object, and advance with sober adventurousness to a better understanding of some aspect of love. No person finds his own conduct or that of anyone else he meets hard to explain or justify, so far as I know . . . , there was no inconsequence in the action itself.<sup>85</sup>

To describe The Book of the Duchess Bronson's excellent summary of qualities of dream aura will be quoted here:

The way in which one episode opens into another without the logical connections or transitions: the Dreamer awakened into his dream by a burst of bird-song, to find himself on his bed with the morning sun making kaleidoscopic patterns through the windows of his chamber, richly stained with the Troy legend, and all the walls painted with the scenes of the Romance of the Rose; sounds outside of preparations for a royal hunt; the Dreamer's taking his horse at once and joining the party; the recall from the hunt; the disappearance of his horse ("I was go walked fro my tree"); the appearance and vanishing of the puppy--no hunting-dog, certainly; the flowery path through the woods full of wild creatures; the discovery of the handsome knight sitting against a huge oak and lost in grief--all this has the familiar but unforeseen and strange air of the dream.<sup>86</sup>

French, I think, is right as long as we confine our attention to Froissart's poem. The work relates the encounter of a dreamer with personifications, with whom, in long static scenes, he engages in polite and perfectly orderly conversation. Nothing unaccountably appears or disappears. There are no images with complex overtones of significance. Could



this poem too remind us of actual dream experience in some way? Is it a culture-pattern dream, unfamiliar now, but acceptably like a dream at the time? To establish actuality behind the divine dream in literature, Dodds looked for confirming evidence outside Homer.<sup>87</sup> If there is any such confirming evidence for the type Froissart presents, I am not aware of it. In Froissart's use the dream seems to be no more than a frame, such as Walter de la Mare describes:

As a literary device, it may be simply what its frame is to a picture; and, as such, is best left intact when the tale is done. But just as a glimpse of what is at least intended to be a poem at once vaguely invokes in our minds all that we associate with poetry, whatever our care for it may be; so when any particular poem has for theme either an actual or a fictitious dream we associate it with all that we think and feel in regard to dreaming.<sup>88</sup>

Chaucer's poem, I would argue, is at least closer to de la Mare's second type than is Froissart's.

But it is not adequate to let the dream character of The Book of the Duchess rest on such details as Bronson summarizes (nor does Bronson in his own treatment). Dream-likeness in that narrow sense is too confining for the needs of Chaucer's poem. The more important contrast with Froissart's poem concerns the overall relation of the dream event to the dreamer. Despite the psychological preparation Froissart offers and despite the fact that the dreamer discusses topics of personal interest--love and poetry--one does not, I think, have the impression that the dream is an extension of experience for the dreamer. Personifications together with such orderly and general discourse defeat the



sense of a personal event. Chaucer's poem, as we will see, invites being understood (not exclusively but as a dimension) as the psychological property of the narrator.

If the comparative account is a fair one, then it is possible to add a final clarification to the viewpoint of this study. French bases his treatment of the dream of The Book of the Duchess entirely on the assumption that the dream is whatever Chaucer "knew and imitated from books,"<sup>89</sup> such as the love visions. That is to say, French takes no account whatsoever of Chaucer's general handling of dreams; he assumes that the dream of the dream visions is purely a function of the poetic type. I attempt to get at the dream as a function of Chaucer's handling of the dream, which enters now into a dream vision, now into another kind of narrative.

To consider the dream from the point of view of dreaming experience, it is necessary to consider whether the narrator tells the reader what attitude to take toward it. Is the dream presented as a revelation from superior forces? The question is raised by a comically exaggerated praise of the dream. It is, the narrator tells us,

So wonderful, that never yit  
Y trowe no man had the wyt  
To konne wel my sweven rede . . .  
(BD, 277-79).

He describes it also as "ynly swete" (BD, 276). Possibly Chaucer wants his reader to have in mind inner impressiveness, such as Averroes speaks of, as a mark of revelation.<sup>90</sup> At







the same time, in his exaggerated claims, he tells us that famous interpreters of revelatory dreams could scarcely "arede my dremes even" (BD, 289). However comic, the statement contains a hint that their systems are not applicable to this dream.

Additional marks of authenticity may be considered. The favorable morning hour that Bloomfield mentions appears here, but inside the dream. Time for the external circumstances of the dream is not clear. It was, we learn, "late, this other night" when the narrator turned to reading to "drive the night away . . . ." It would be possible to suppose that the night has been driven away by the time the dream takes place, but all that we can be certain of is that the poet dreams that his dream begins "in the dawninge." It appears that Chaucer's concern is rather with the symbolic appropriateness of the dawning for events of the dream than with marking the dream as a prophetic morning occurrence. If we compare the narrator's dream with that of Alcyone we see again what may be called a reluctance of the narrator to outright claim his dream as true. Alcyone prays to Juno for a revelatory dream:

Send me grace to slepe, and mete  
 In my slep som certeyn sweven  
 Wherthourgh that I may knowen even  
 Whether my lord be guyk or ded  
                                   (BD, 118-21).

Morpheus becomes the agent for that dream. The narrator prays as well, but for sleep rather than a dream and promising a gift to



. . . thilke Morpheus,  
 Or hys goddesse, dame Juno,  
 Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who,  
 To make me slepe and have som reste . . .  
 (BD, 242-45).

One may attribute the dreamer's prayer to general obtuseness, to an exaggerated state of suffering, or--as he does directly--to his "game." But the effect, as far as authenticating the dream is concerned, is to leave some doubt. There are easier ways of saying that the dream is true. The Pearl poet says his is a "verray avisioun";<sup>91</sup> Gower, as we have seen, in the first book of Vox Clamantis, suggests that his is provided by an angel.<sup>92</sup>

The question I am pursuing is not whether the reader may find some truth value in Chaucer's poem. The question is only whether the narrator offers it as a revelatory type and whether he insists on its credibility in that respect. It would seem to be the case with Chaucer that it is very hard to get beyond the idea that he leaves judgment of the truth value and with it the revelatory character of the dream to the reader.

However, it may be with the dream as a revelation from higher powers, the dream is, in any event, not predictive (at least as long as we remain--as I intended to do here--within boundaries of the narrative itself) but rather insightful. Traditionally critics have understood the knight in black to represent John of Gaunt and have seen the poem as consolation for him. But in recent years, attention has increasingly been given to identifying the man in black



with the dreamer himself.<sup>93</sup> As Friedman puts it:

In focusing our attention on the Knight's bereavement, however, we tend to lose sight of the fact that that Dreamer, also, is suffering from a personal problem, less well defined to be sure, but one whose effects in many ways parallel the distresses of the Man in Black. Indeed, the theme of personal loss and its effects on man's physical and psychic condition runs throughout the poem, beginning with the Narrator's opening lines about himself, and moving directly into a literary example, the story of Alcione and her lost king. Whatever consolation Chaucer may have intended for John of Gaunt, it seems likely that he would have presented it through his development of this more universal theme.<sup>94</sup>

This leads to a reading in which the narrator is seen to undergo recovery from his initial state of disorder, through "philosophic understanding and human sympathy."<sup>95</sup> An important contribution by Friedman is his identification of the dog of the dream as a symbol of healing and of the power of reason.<sup>96</sup>

Though Friedman does not discuss the dream as such at all, his overall presentation constitutes, nevertheless, one way of describing Chaucer's handling of the dream in this case. Without duplicating Friedman's treatment, I want to review the poem briefly from the perspective of emphasis on the dream in a way that I believe is somewhat parallel to Friedman's.

One difficulty Friedman's interpretation leaves is how to understand the narrator's opening lines. Bronson, who also offers an excellent reading that establishes the presence of the dream as dream, believes that ". . . the beginning of his narrative, which is also in a sense the ending, encloses the poem with his melancholy."<sup>97</sup> Friedman





seems to find the opening to represent a beginning only. The tense of the opening lines is in the present, but they move abruptly into a past: "So when I saw I might not slepe/ Til now late, this other night . . ." (BD, 44 f.) and tell eventually of an interruption in the general condition--in that sense providing us with initial circumstances for the dream--but simultaneously a reconsideration of the condition which takes events of the dream into account. The narrator has only "ydel thoght" (BD, 3), has "felynge in nothyng" (BD, 11) and knows "not what is best to doo" (BD, 29)--but not entirely. He is now as well full of the thought of the dream, the events leading to it and the accomplishments of ordering a poem to which it led, and those too he cannot get out of his mind.

In accounting for his sleeplessness the narrator tells us that "there is phisicien but oon/ That may hele; but that is don" (BD, 39 f.). Since the narrator is linked with the knight in black who has lost his love, and empathizes with Alcione who has lost her love, it seems necessary to suppose that the physician for his love ailment is a lady who is literally or figuratively dead to him. His refusal to name the physician also indicates that the narrator is unwilling to admit the loss of his lady. But the narrator's problem may be more complex still. Initial attention to imaginative disorder is important. Lack of sleep has left "sorwful ymaginacioun" which "Ys alway hooly in my mynde," the narrator explains (BD, 14 f.). It is



because he has "Suche fantansies" that he knows not what to do. Since the narrator does not name the physician one may wonder whether the line carries further meanings as well. With Friedman's description of the dog as guide to a healing conversation in mind, one might suggest that reason is the physician for his generally disordered state.<sup>98</sup> From that perspective the dream, as an imaginative projection by the dreamer, shows a wayward imagination quite literally brought under reasonable control. That is to say, the narrator's imagination, disordered in his waking condition, is projected in a dream experience which depicts the dreamer coming to terms with an unreasonable sorrow and which becomes that most ordered of entities, a poem.

Aside from establishing a problem for the narrator, Chaucer invites a reading centered on the dreamer by taking such care to link dreamer and knight, to establish the life situation of the dreamer and to show the effect of the dream on the dreamer. Bronson calls attention to similarities of condition. Both are out of accord with nature in their suffering (BD, 18-21 and 467-69); for both the spirit suffers loss of quickness (BD, 25f. and 489-92); and both are out of touch with their surroundings (BD, 6f., 11-13 and 509-11).<sup>99</sup> Additionally, both are described as naked. The dreamer lay "in my bed al naked" (BD, 293), while the knight explains that he is one whom "deth hath mad al naked/ Of al the blysse that ever was maked" (BD, 577f.). Both speak of physicians who do not come to their aid. "For there is



phiscien but oon/ That may me hele; but that is don" (BD, 39f.), the dreamer states. And the knight asserts: "Ne hele me may no phiscien" (BD, 571). Also Chaucer makes a point of having the dreamer immediately know the knight's thoughts at one point:

. . . he spak noght,  
But argued with his owne thoght,  
And in hys wyt disputed faste  
Why and how hys lyf myght laste  
(BD, 503-06).

In that condition, the narrator attempts to divert himself with a book. The book, he explains, is better than chess, a reference which, we may suppose, is supplied with a motive within the dream since the game is associated with loss of the lady. In any case, the choice of the book helps further explain the dreamer's state of mind. Its attractiveness depends on its being written formerly "While men loved the law of kinde" (BD, 56), and the dreamer has already suggested that he is concerned about living "agaynes kynde" (BD, 16). The book performs the further function of preparing for royal figures in the dream, thus binding the dream to the dreamer by a detail of transformation. The specific tale chosen presents a variant of the dreamer's own problem. Alcione has lost her beloved and does not know it: the narrator presumably has lost his love and does not want to acknowledge the fact. As Friedman notes, the narrator's sympathy moves him one step toward control over the emptiness of feeling he initially described.<sup>100</sup>

The dreamer awakens in his dream to dawn and strong light. The light of waking consciousness had not availed him, but sleep brings a change. The light for Chaucer's





dreamer is accompanied by a number of other impressive elements. There is the harmony of birds singing a "moste solempne servise" (BD, 302), and his whole chamber is painted with stories, instancing ordered experience. Purposeful behavior is introduced with the hunt, first for the company in general, then for the dreamer himself. The image of "hert-huntyng" is a condensation: an animal is hunted, but a heart is hunted as well, in more than one sense, no doubt. The dreamer hunts down the troubled heart of the knight. The knight hunts out the matter of the heart, that is the loved lady.

For conduct of the dialog with the black knight, Bronson's account is, given transfer of attention from knight to dreamer, applicable here. What the knight learns, the dreamer learns as well as aids in learning. I will only stress a few elements. The dreamer takes up his task. He comes to talk of his lost love. He comes to acknowledge that she is dead, although that alone is not enough (as the early statement of her death by the knight shows). He also needs to recall the course of his life with her. In doing so, he comes to learn, as J. Burke Severs puts it (speaking of the knight) that "it is better to have loved and lost than to have loved and been rejected or to have loved and been deserted."<sup>101</sup> And he becomes able to realize that he does not have cause to regret having loved.

"Repentaunce! nay, fy" quod he  
 "Shoulde y now repente me  
 To love?"

(BD, 1115-17).



With the ending of the dream, something has been accomplished, as the symbols tell us. The hunt ends. The bell striking twelve marks, according to Bronson's exposition, an end and a beginning,<sup>102</sup> and is, as another critic puts it, "an auditory image of organized civility."<sup>103</sup> The king returns to his castle, indicating that order rules. Finally, in response to the dream, the narrator takes up his task as a poet, performing the orderly task of putting "this sweven in ryme" (BD, 1332). The dream, then, it would seem, has corrected or is in the process of correcting the imbalance and disorder of excessive sorrow so that life can go on.

### The House of Fame

In The Book of the Duchess, varying perspectives on the dream as dream--by which I mean the dream as a poetic telling, the dream as a psychological experience, and the dream as a sense of dreamlikeness--either contribute to a single movement of the poem as a consolation of the dreamer, or, at least, do not interfere with each other. In The House of Fame, the same thing cannot, I think, be said. In it, dreamlikeness (in a way I will develop) establishes a strong sense of the narrator's psychological experience, but is played against an understanding of the dream as a poetic account. So at least I will argue. Despite the difficulties, to which I have already pointed, of showing the presence of a dreamlike aura, I want to try to point to its presence



here and to suggest a reason for its conflicting relationship to the dream as poem told.

The House of Fame is a long, confusing and incomplete poem. Critics disagree not only about the theme of the work, but about whether it has a unifying theme at all. It is not my purpose here to try to interpret the wealth of materials in the poem House of Fame, but only to examine certain potentialities of Chaucer's handling of the dream in the light of an attitude toward the poem.<sup>104</sup> Whatever else one may make of the poem, it seems necessary to recognize that the poem is about a poet who is, from beginning to end, concerned with the appearance of things. It is that thematic strand to which I wish to relate some comments about the dream.

Robert J. Allen explores how the poem "preserves a sustained interest in the nature of literary art."<sup>105</sup> Donald C. Baker, who wants to lift that interest from the level of a motif, which Allen claimed, to the level of theme, summarizes some findings about art and poetry in the work:

Everywhere the reader turns in the poem he is met with an emphasis upon artifice, upon the artist. From the initial concern with the interpretation of dreams on through the Dido episode, the poet's trips with the Eagle to gather tidings for his use as a poet, "Geoffrey's" maze of adventures in The House of Fame featuring the poets, entertainers, jugglers, historians, and singers, to his final, giddy experience in the whirling House of Rumor, the emphasis is everywhere upon the poet . . .<sup>106</sup>

To Allen, the interest in the poet's endeavors and materials entails a decision in favor of poetic fancy as against





scientific authority and concern for truth. Allen tells us:

The literary artist accepts his material without interesting himself in its factual accuracy, but with the delight shown by Geoffrey himself as he hurries about "Me for to pleyen and for to lere/ And eke a tydyng for to here . . . ."107

But that decision is not so clear. Clemen finds a positive "longing" by the poet for truth.<sup>108</sup> And Sheila Delaney

concludes from an investigation of the narrator's prayer to be delivered from phantom and illusion that Chaucer must have thought of his poem "as belonging to the category of tidings 'of fals and soth compouned'" with some unease:

The chaotic world of the House of Fame has shown the reader contradiction at many levels: between literary traditions such as the conflicting Virgilian and Ovidian versions of Dido; between will and duty, or contradictory "trothe" as in the story of Aeneas; between historical merit and reward. A certain skepticism has been established, particularly with regard to the validity of various kinds of verbal statement, which the reader would find difficult to suspend for the words of any man of authority, however great. In this complexity, moreover, we recognize kinds of experience which are not limited to the fourteenth century. Any attempt to provide a neat, summary solution to the problem of distinguishing truth from falseness would itself be an illusory effort.<sup>109</sup>

In part at least The House of Fame would seem to represent a comic exploration of a poet's terrible doubt of appearances.

What appears in this dream of a long, cold night?<sup>110</sup>  
In the first place, there are too many appearances; the poet's dream world is one of troublesome abundance. In the temple of glass are "moo ymages . . . then I saugh ever" (HF, 121-27). The eagle tells him such a full list of "wonder thynges" (HF, 674) that he is to hear in the House of Fame that he finds it "impossible, to my wit" (HF, 702).



"The grete soun" (HF, 1025) that "rumbleth up and doun/ In fames Hous, full of tydynges" (HF, 1026f.) makes him "for fere swete" (HF, 1042). Clemen is especially struck by the "wealth of impressions" in Book III and refers to the use of "long lists," citing lines 1187, 1217, 1260, 1301, 1960.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, Clemen points out that "the idea of a vast number, of an almost overwhelming variety, is conveyed to us by the use of numerical comparisons to express an 'innumerable' profusion,"<sup>112</sup> such as that the castle of Fame is "ful eke of wyndowes,/ As flakes falle in grete snowes" (HF, 1191f.), or that Fame "as feele eyen hadde . . ./ As fetheres upon foules be" (HF, 1381f.).

The narrator is hard put to recount his experience. "Hyt were a long proces to tell" (HF, 251) all about Dido and Aeneas, he explains; Dido's activities would be "too long to endyte" (HF, 381). He cannot describe all the coats of arms of those in the House of Fame,

For hyt to me were impossible;  
Men myghte make of hem a bible  
Twenty foot thykke, as y trowe  
(HF, 1333-35).

"What should I make lenger tale/ of alle the pepil y ther say" (HF, 1282f.), he asks concerning the people outside the House of Fame. "Loo! how shulde I now telle al thys?" (HF, 1341), he asks upon entering the house. Clemen summarizes a number of such "protestations":

he assures us that we must not linger over something more than is necessary, that he must eschew lengthy or detailed descriptions, that he cannot do justice to the abundance of what he sees.<sup>113</sup>



The effect, as Clemen states, is to "strengthen the impression of overwhelming profusion and of amazement."<sup>114</sup>

And everywhere, the dreamer encounters the pressures of falsehood, illusion, deception, unreasonableness. In reacting to the Dido story that he experienced as dreamer, the narrator recalls a number of stories. Concerning them, he emphasizes not "wikke Fame" (HF, 349), for instance, but falsehood of the lovers.<sup>115</sup> And he remarks of these deceptions in general: "But wel-away! the harm, the routhe,/ That hath betyd for such untrouthe" (HF, 383 f.). In that respect, consequences of the desert scene are acutely ironic. Totally without the guidance of materials, the poet-dreamer cries out to be saved "Fro fantome and illusion," as was discussed earlier. Responding to the prayer is an eagle, himself shifting in appearance (loftily associated with the sun, but prosaic in speech) who leads the dreamer on exploration of vanities and illusions. To entertain the dreamer on the way to wonderful sights he has promised, the eagle discourses on sounds (including by implication the sounds of poetry), revealing that

Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,  
And every speche that ys spoken,  
Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,  
In his substaunce ys but air . . .  
(HF, 765-68).

This eagle takes the dreamer to an illusory castle--"That stood upon so hygh a roche,/ Hier stant ther non in Spayne" (HF, 1116 f.), the narrator explains.<sup>116</sup> Outside the dreamer finds a number of illusion-makers:





Magiciens, and tregetours,  
 And Phitonesses, charmeresses,  
 Olde wicches, sorceresses . . .  
 (HF, 1260-63).

Inside are a number of epic poets associated with Calliope, but among them the dreamer discovers talk of deception; it is said that "Omer made lyas,/ Feynyng in hys poetries . . ." (HF, 1477 f.). It is apparently in resentment of the fact that instances of fame are unreliable as indicators of the true state of merit of its recipients (since Fame reacts arbitrarily to virtues and failings alike) that the dreamer speaks out to the stranger in the House of Fame. He emphasizes that Fame does not know the truth of his own merits and therefore should not judge ("I wot myself best how y stonde" (HF, 1878), he asserts). In the house of twigs, the chief experience is that of mixing the false with the true (a phenomenon about which he has been hearing from the eagle, HF, 676 and 1029). The dreamer watches false and true tidings pass together from the house of twigs: "Thus saugh I fals and soth compouned/ Togeder fle for oo tydyng" (HF, 2108f.).

In this setting, what are the functions of the prolog on dreams? I want to concentrate here on just two. One is to foreshadow and comment on the dreamer's experiences directly. As it is with the dreamer's world of appearances, so it is with the narrator's world of dream theories. There are too many possibilities and one cannot be sure what is true and false among them. The narrator would leave the problem to those more expert, just as the dreamer refuses,



at the end, to tell a "tydyngge," because "Folk kan synge hit bet than I . . ." (HF, 2138). The narrator's opinion concerning dream theories, I have argued, appears confusing but is directly reasonable. Perhaps Chaucer aimed for something of the same effect throughout. However that may be, there is another role for the prologue that depends on its relationship with other prologues and invocations and on its relationship with the conduct of the dream all of which in a moment I will attempt to explore. In that role, the prologue calls attention by means of theory, to actual dreams of human experience, as if the narrator were about to recount one such.

If we try to relate the dream of The House of Fame to typologies of one kind or another, the task is difficult. Hieatt suggests that it would be illogical for the poet to assign a cause (which would indicate a type), since he has just told us that he does not know what causes dreams.<sup>117</sup> Curry makes an effort, though, calling it a somnium coeleste. Unfortunately, Curry does not describe what a somnium coeleste would look like, indicating only, as we saw earlier, that it does not use the same processes as what he calls somnium animale. In this case the narrator does not provide us with a detailed set of thoughts and circumstances which we can watch being transformed into dream materials, as in the case of other dream visions. Aside from that, however, the dream exhibits just such characteristics as Curry indicated (by references to Kittredge and Tupper) belong to the



somnium animale. The problem here is not Curry's alone. A somnium coeleste would presumably impress the mind of the dreamer with spiritual or intellectual truths. If it did so directly, there would presumably be no difficulty about judging what one had received. But if the truths are communicated through the imaginative processes of the dreamer, then it must be difficult to tell where the imaginative embodiment ends and the spiritual or intellectual ingredients begin. From a slightly different angle we might identify the dream as having the style of a journey of the soul or intellectual flight, as Robinson names it.<sup>118</sup> The dreamer finds himself in extraordinary surroundings at the beginning and is finally taken on a flight to other worlds by a special guide.

To see these several factors together, I will try first to reveal the heavily dreamlike atmosphere of the poem. The kind of approach Hieatt uses for "realism" in the dream visions would be useful here, even though Hieatt herself finds disappointingly little to her purpose in The House of Fame: "He is not really trying to convince anyone that this dream could have happened . . . ," she states.<sup>119</sup> But I think he is, in part. The dream seems close to the "living and moving picture" dream described by Havelock Ellis: "No man ever gazed at a dream picture which was at rest to his sleeping eye as are the pictures we gaze at with our waking eyes."<sup>120</sup> Compare that with the dreamer's experience in the temple of glass. The words of the literary







text on the "table of bras" (HF, 142) become pictures or yield to pictures, and the pictures move and become mingled with soul as if the actuality of their scenes were present (for instance, HF, 140-73).

Among touches one might note as appropriate for a dream is the sharp contrast between opulent and lively surroundings of the temple and the barren field:

As fer as that I myghte see,  
 Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,  
 Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond . . .  
 (HF, 483-85).

Such sharp and sudden change has the "unforeseen and strange air of the dream" that Bronson noted for dream elements in The Book of the Duchess, as mentioned before.<sup>121</sup> Within the desert scene itself, David M. Bevington remarks in passing on a "nightmarish quality" as the dreamer "is alone in a desert, powerless to escape the 'clawes starke' of the eagle."<sup>122</sup> The narrator tells us, jokingly, but nevertheless appropriately, that what he is approaching is a dream image as he moves toward the house as high as any in Spain (HF, 1114f.). The rock material itself turns out to present a fusion of appearances (HF, 1124-30). A spectacular dramatization, as the eagle prepares the narrator to find, is the turning of words into people:

Whan any speche ycomen ys  
 Up to the paleys, anon-ryght  
 Hyt wexeth lyk the same wight  
 Which that the word in erthe spak,  
 Be hyt clothed red or blak;  
 And hath so verray hys lyknesse  
 That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse  
 That it the same body be,



Man or woman, he or she  
(HF, 1074-82).

Or one might turn to account some comments by C. G. Jung in describing conditions favorable for the appearance of archetypal forms:

the images in the dream or fantasy are connected with cosmic qualities, such as temporal and spatial infinity, enormous speed and extension of movement, "astrological" associations . . . changes in the proportion of the body, etc.<sup>123</sup>

That would seem to be especially relevant for a poem with a flight so high "That al the world, as to myn ye,/ No more semed than a prikke . . .," as the narrator tells us (HF, 906f.), with its sight of "the ayerissh bestes" (HF, 965), its house of twigs revolving "as swift as thought" (HF, 1924), and its unstable figure of Fame:

Me thoughte that she was so lyte  
That the lengthe of a cubite  
Was lengere than she semed be.  
But thus sone, in a whyle, she  
Hir tho so wonderliche streighte  
That with hir fet she erthe reighte,  
And with hir hed she touched hevene  
(HF, 1369-75).

More basic still than such touches for the dream atmosphere is the general sense the narrator provides of being caught up in a swirl of unpremeditated experience. The narrator does not try to hide the fact that the dream is an imaginative occurrence--"me mette" and "me thoughte" appear. But there is here a strong sense of that basic objectivity consequent upon a dreamer's not willing the images of his dream, which carries with it a flavor of fully objective dreaming. Not perfectly so, but in large part, narrative preparation for occurrences is missing; a stream



of experiences comes to the dreamer with apparent spontaneity. For instance, at the beginning the dreamer does not know how he happens to be in the temple of glass; he must surmise that it belongs to Venus. Emerging from the temple, he is shocked to discover a desert. He calls for help and receives it, but in a form which astonishes him. Approaching the House of Fame he finds he must climb a mountain, a task which had not been mentioned by the eagle. He discovers names, sees musicians, and various illusion-makers, discovers poets bearing up the fame of various groups--all without anticipation.

That the narrator aims at reproducing unwilling experience seems clear from his use of the formula "was I war." He uses it first as he depicts the dreamer looking heavenward after praying to be saved from illusion:

Thoo was I war, lo! at the laste,  
That faste be the sonne, as hye  
As kenne myghte I with myn yē,  
Me thoughte I sawgh an egle sore . . .  
(HF, 496-99).

Again in the House of Fame, after the dreamer hears songs celebrating Fame, he tells us:

Tho was I war, loo, atte laste,  
As I myne eyen gan up caste.  
That thys ylke noble quene  
On her shuldres gan sustene  
Bothe th'armes and the name  
Of thoo that hadde large fame . . .  
(HF, 1407-12).

The dreamer is contemplating the house of twigs when he says:

. . . Tho war was y  
How that myn egle, faste by,  
Was perched hye upon a stoon . . .  
(HF, 1989-91).





In other ways as well he indicates striving for the spontaneous effect. Having arrived at a stopping point on his way to the House of Fame, he explains, "Y nyste how, but in a strete/ He sette me fair on my fete" (HF, 1049f.). While his attention is occupied by the sight of epic poets, the noise of petitioners begins or makes itself felt: "But while that y beheld thys syghte,/ I herde a noyse aprochen blyve" (HF, 1520f.). How the stranger arrives, we are not told; he is suddenly present:

With that y gan aboute wende,  
 For oon that stood ryght at my bak,  
 Me thoughte, goodly to me spak . . .  
(HF, 1868-70).

To the extent at least that my brief account is accurate, the narrator has succeeded in building an illusion of a dream such as man might experience. What happens to that illusion may be compared with what happens to the suggestion of celestial influence and to what happens to the suggestion of a journey of the soul. To take the last first, "Thou art noyous for to carye," the eagle complains. Not a joke about Chaucer's portliness, but a comment about the nature of the narrator's experience would seem to be the point of the comment. St. Paul's revelation was without use of his body, St. Augustine explains;<sup>124</sup> the narrator's experience is tied to his body. The journey of the soul or intellectual flight emphasizes intellectual participation not bodily. Reference to the body then calls attention to the limitation of the experience as a flight



of the mind. The eagle as Jove's representative would seem to lend something of a celestial influence that Curry calls for, but the eagle speaks, the narrator specifies, with "mannes vois" (HF, 556), and lectures pedantically. Proems and invocations are also used to establish the validity of the dream, says Curry,<sup>125</sup> but they rather are concerned, as we will see, with poetic achievements. The only one that comes close to supporting the notion of the dream as in some way celestially or divinely influenced is in Book II. In that proem, the narrator associates his dream with some others, but in a way that does not, as I noted in the first chapter, necessarily claim authority for it. His dream is "So sely," he tells us (HF, 513), that none of the others he names has dreamed one like it. The others he names include some illustrious and well-known dreamers--Isaiah and Scipio begin the list; but the list ends with "Elcanor." Scholars have not agreed about who Elcanor is, but Tatlock suggests that it has been added for anticlimax.<sup>126</sup> What these several factors share is the undercutting of pretension and illusion.

For the undercutting of the sense of dreamlikeness itself there are several factors to consider. The opening of the poem talks about dreams of actual experience. In the invocation which follows, the poet prays to the god of sleep, not to receive a dreaming experience at all, but "that he wole me spede/ My sweven for to tell aryght," adding, a bit mockingly perhaps, "Yf every drem stonde in his myght"



(HF, 79f.). Apart from the references to dreams of the illustrious the proem of Book II includes an appeal to the narrator's own thought, which hints that the dream is what he thought up, not underwent, and which emphasizes his interest in telling, not experiencing, the dream:

O Thought, that wrot al that I mette,  
And in the tresorye hyt shette  
Of my brayn, now shal men se,  
Yf any vertu in the be,  
To tellen al my drem aryght  
(HF, 523-27).

And that the telling is not the disinterested repetition of an inner experience, but is fully a poem, is emphasized in the invocation to Apollo of Book III:

O God of science and of lyght,  
Appollo, thurgh thy grete myght,  
This lytel laste bok thou gye!  
Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,  
Here art poetical be shewed;  
But for the rym ys lyght and lewed,  
Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,  
Though som vers fayle in a sillable;  
And that I do no diligence  
To shewe craft, but o sentence  
(HF, 1091-1100).

And within the dream narration itself, we find an utter breakdown of pretense to the narrator's undergoing dreaming experience. After quoting a speech by Dido, the narrator remarks: "As me mette redely;/ Non other auctour alegge I" (HF, 313f.). Did the narrator then "dream" the remainder of the Dido story and the remainder of the poem, or rather did he compose his dream from literary sources? Evidently he did not dream all of it, for shortly we read that something that he experienced is too complex to tell, and the interested reader can find it elsewhere for himself:





Rede Virgile in Eneydos  
 Or the Epistle of Ovyde,  
 What that she wrot or that she dyde . . .  
 (HF, 378-80).

What I am suggesting, then, is that the dream as poetic account is set against the dream as an evocation of dreaming events in a way which breaks the illusion of pervasively unpremeditated, dreamlike experience. The importance of doing so in this case depends on such thematic considerations as Delaney indicates. If this tale too combines "at ones/ A lesyng and a sad soth" (HF, 2088f.), the dream is used both to discuss the general theme and reveal a specific case.

#### The Parliament of Fowls

By means of the passage on preoccupations and wishes (PF, 99-105) and the example of the appearance of Scipio within his dream (as we discussed in chapter II), the narrator of The Parliament of Fowls would seem to present the dream of that work as the imaginative projection of the dreamer's thoughts. The passage almost necessitates the good critical agreement we find that Chaucer is presenting some manner of psychological guide to the dramatic events--at least among critics who bother to discuss the dream as such in some sense. At the same time several critics have tried to see in the dream something beyond the psychological contribution of the dreamer. Their interest in doing so is to establish the dream's claim to truth.



Curry finds that

lest someone should doubt the significance of his somnium animale, he proceeds to give it a touch of the somnium coeleste by addressing a prayer for help to Venus . . . .<sup>127</sup>

Robertson flatly and very plausibly denies that appeal to Cytherea lends the dream authority:

The irony is two-fold. As the overt subject of the Valentine poem, she is the cause of his dream; she is responsible for the follies which he is ridiculing. He invoked her help as one who can best aid him, as truly as he saw her "north-north-west" when he began to write his poem. That is, she may help him not at all.<sup>128</sup>

For Robertson, the dream has authority even so, since the work is a dream vision. Robertson's assumption that the dream is a device serving truth through allegory does not require the poem to make an internal truth claim. Bennett does not use Robertson's particular understanding of allegory, but his position is like one Robertson could adopt in finding that the narrator's allusion to The Dream of Scipio authenticates the dream. Bennett states:

Both Cicero's text and Macrobius' would yield precedent and suggestion for the dream that Chaucer is about to describe. Chaucer presents it as his own somnium ("sweven"), in which the same Africanus plays (at the beginning) a like oracular role and so lends some weight to its "sentence."<sup>129</sup>

Whether the effect of Scipio's appearance indeed lends authority to what the dreamer is doing, or whether it indeed constitutes a like role to Scipio's role in The Dream of Scipio is, of course, arguable. Bronson's account of Scipio's appearance views it differently:

Nonplussed with the ironic inappropriateness of Africanus' teaching to what he was seeking, the poet retires troubled in spirit:



For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,  
 And ek I madde that thyng that I wolde.  
 With his head full of contradictory thoughts, now of earthly love, now of Cicero's--and then certainly Dante's--account of heaven and hell, the poet falls asleep. And now, by a delicious touch of the topsy-turvy logic of dreams the moral Africanus appears before him to conduct him, not to a sober view of the future life, but to the lover's paradise with its conventional landscape, its temple of love and its personified abstractions!<sup>130</sup>

There is, I think we may conclude, no unmistakable claim within the body of the work that the dream is true.

If we turn to the dream setting for a signal of a prophetic dream, we find none. The dream does not take place in the prophetic morning hours; instead

The day gan faylen, and the derke nyght,  
 That reveth bestes from here besynesse,  
 Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght,  
 And to my bed I gan me for to dresse,  
 Fulfylde of thought and busy hevynesse  
 For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,  
 And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde.  
 Aut fynally, my spirit at the laste,  
 For wery of my labour al the day,  
 Tok reste, that made me to slepe faste . . .  
 (PF, 85-94).

The external dream conditions, then, are those appropriate for the narrator's state of mind; he is in darkness, but, unlike the beasts, is still struggling with his problem as he falls asleep. Nor does the narrator's waking reaction to his dream establish it as revelatory. If the narrator thought of his dream as revelatory, he presumably would think of it as offering a satisfactory solution to his problems. It is questionable that he does so. Psychological character and truth value are not necessarily mutually exclusive in a dream; but, dependent on how one understands the





general course of the dream, the narrator in this case may be insisting that the dream is not a revelation by superior forces but the narrator's own product. That the narrative depends to a large extent on the narrator's psychological processes seems to me to be a reasonable assumption, but in need of a clarification. Having given the clarification, I will trace very briefly the movement of the dream as psychological event throughout the poem, and then discuss further the narrator's reaction to his dream.

As psychological experience of the dreamer, the dream does not, I think, rely heavily on a specifically dreamlike aura in a narrative texture. One may, of course, find it useful to refer to such experiences as are found in actual dreams; Bennett, for instance, does so on a few occasions. On the enclosed park that the dreamer enters, Bennett notes its character as an earthly paradise and comments on such paradises: "They are such stuff as dreams are made of and this is a dream."<sup>131</sup> He finds it helpful to refer to dream behaviour to explain how the dream poem carries out the principle of antithesis established in the opening lines, but how it shifts bases.<sup>132</sup> Concerning the resulting "ambiguities and imperfect correspondences," he concludes: "The most that the critic may do at this point is to remark on their appropriateness in a dream-poem . . . ."<sup>133</sup> And he explains that "The dream embodies, whilst, as often happens in dreams, it also slightly alters, the contrast in the image of the twofold gate . . . ."<sup>134</sup>



Further, he asserts that "the inconsequential nature of a dream sufficiently accounts for" the disappearance of Afffrican,<sup>135</sup> adding, however, that the disappearance is appropriate for thematic and narrative reasons as well.<sup>136</sup>

With these instances from Bennett might be considered the image for indecision as the dreamer stands motionless "Right as, betwixen, adamauntes two/ Of evene myght, a pece of yren set" (PF, 148f.). Freud discusses the "sensation of the inhibition of a movement" in dreams as representing a "conflict of will."<sup>137</sup> The behaviour of the royal tercel can be singled out as an instance of displacement, since that fowl carries the principle burden of what becomes, in this setting, courtly pomposity. In general, the birds condense human and birdlike characteristics, which are alternatively played up (as when the royal tercel chooses his "soveryn lady" (PF, 416), and she answers with a blush (PF, 422-45), on the one hand, while some other members of the parliament break out with "Kek kek! kokkow! quek quek!" (PF, 499), on the other).<sup>138</sup>

My own feeling, however, is that there is a much stronger sense of a story being purposefully recounted than an experience being undergone. To show the sense I mean, I call attention, for example, to such time references as appear in lines 204-10. The narrator tells us that there was "nevere . . . grevaunce of hot no cold," that "no man may there waxe sek ne old," and that "nevere wolde it nyghte," quite as if the setting were independent of the



dreamer's experience of it. No doubt such an account is required to establish the locus of the scene as an ideal landscape; I am merely pointing out that the description robs the account at such a point of the dreamlike immediacy we find so frequently in The House of Fame, for instance, when the images and events are those within range of the narrator on the scene. Beyond that, I have in mind the general static nature of the whole dream adventure. There is considerable conversational disorder, but details of the scene itself give me the impression of being clearly accounted for (personifications, for instance, seem to be used for conventional significance and are not treated as personalities encountered, PF, 211-29) and everything seems to be arranged in a given place (birds, for example, are assigned stable locations, PF, 320-29). I give an impression: the account is in general not what I associate with dream versimilitude. And when the narrator breaks off his efforts to tell how many birds he found with Nature to exclaim "But to the poynt" (PF, 372), we can be sure he is asserting narrative and thematic prerogatives over considerations of what is dream-like.

What makes it possible to say that the account is of a dream, in one sense of that term, is that it exhibits the mind of the dreamer at work on the problem he announced at the outset as he imaginatively transforms the materials of his reading before the dream. Critics often see the dream as an attempt to solve a problem. Huppé<sup>1</sup> and Robertson





believe the dreamer's task is, in effect, to pit the perspective of The Dream of Scipio against love in this world to reveal the shortcomings of the latter.<sup>139</sup> For D. S. Brewer, the dreamer's task is, on the contrary, to come to an understanding of love in this world which will correct the onesidedness of the view in The Dream of Scipio.<sup>140</sup> For either view it seems to me appropriate to think of the dream as we find it elsewhere in Chaucer's works. We may think of Anelida's wishful creation of the appearance of Arcite, for example, but note this contrast: the dream for the narrator of The Parliament of Fowls surprises him more than Anelida's dream surprises her. There is, nevertheless, I think, special reason provided by the ending of the poem to emphasize the wilful character of the narrator's dream. I will comment on that point in a moment after a brief look at the nature of the transformations in the narrator's account.

I want to look at those transformations from a slightly different angle than usual. I would like to regard the dream world as the realm of earthly love which reveals an attempt to duplicate for earthly love the virtues Scipio speaks of from the standpoint of The Dream of Scipio.

Three major elements from The Dream of Scipio which provide "recurring motifs"<sup>141</sup> for the narrator's dream are the concepts of common profit, the blissful place and harmony. While working for common profit is a duty which Affrican explains is supposed to be performed on earth (PF,



46f. and 74f.), it is at least dubious whether the dreamer finds it an effective attribute of his realm. If anyone in the dream works for common profit, it is, of course, under the aegis of Nature, not of the Venus of the temple. But the eagles work against the common need of the fowls, as the complaint about their interminable speeches indicates: "Have don, and lat us wende!" (PF, 492). And the lower birds come to such jangling and wrangling that it is hard to identify them as champions of common profit either.

The blissful place and harmony are not originally attributed to the earth at all. After a life of working for common profit, a man "shulde into a blysfyl place wende,/ There as joye is that last withouten ende" (PF, 48f.). The dreamer tries to match it in his earthly paradise:

Yit was there joye more a thousandfold  
 Than man can telle; ne nevere wolde it nyghte,  
 But ay cler day to any manes syghte  
 (PF, 208-10).

But once past that initial impression, the dreamer finds Cupid and a mixed company ("Plesaunce" and "Curteysie," but also "Craft" and "Foolhardynesse") somewhat out of keeping with the pleasant and serene setting. And upon leaving the dark, tormented scene in the temple of Venus (which also lies within the original seemingly blissful park), the dreamer feels in need of "solace" (PF, 297). Then, though he returns to the place "That I of spak, that was so sote and green" (PF, 296), the blissfulness of the scene is largely dispelled by the activity among the birds. The closely related theme of harmony is treated similarly. What



The Dream of Scipio describes is "melodye . . ./ That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre . . ." (PF, 60f.). The dream attempts to match it:

Of instruments of strenges in acord  
Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse,  
That God, that makere is of al and lord,  
New herde nevere beter, as I gesse  
(PF, 197-200).

Soon the sound heard is "a swogh that gan about renne,/ Which sikes were engendered with desyr" (PF, 247f.), not like the original sweet harmony. And later the dreamer hears simply "noyse" of birds (PF, 492).<sup>121</sup>

The poem is one of conflicting tendencies, and it is not surprising to find a range of opinions about the outcome of the dream. Huppé and Robertson assert that the "lesson" of the poem is: "the vanity of the world and of the lovers of the world,"<sup>142</sup> Bennett believes the narrator has learned "some inkling of the place of love in the scheme of things."<sup>143</sup> It is not vain, but it is limited: ". . . for all the values that inhere in love, the world of lovers is not the whole world; love is but a 'function' of Nature."<sup>144</sup> Baker finds that the dream ends in a way which "declares love is basically good."<sup>145</sup> For Baker's reading, that means as well that the poet of love has achieved the justification he sought--"the justification of love, and consequently, of . . . the love poet."<sup>146</sup> But Baker treats the dream as a wish fulfillment which the poet does not accept:





But this is a dream. And the Poet must awaken to reality, and with reality returns the disturbing concern for a problem that has not been fully solved by Cytherea's dream.<sup>147</sup>

Robert O. Payne asserts that the poet does not know what to think about love:

Although his guide at the beginning of the dream had promised him he would learn things about love which would enable him to write better poetry, Chaucer the dreamer is no more able than we readers or the birds to reconcile or make categorical sense out of the clutter of disparate perspectives the vision offers him.<sup>148</sup>

What we make of the final lines will vary, of course, with what we find the outcome of the dream to be. From the perspective employed here, the final lines serve to claim the dream as the product of the dreamer's own imagination and indicate a measure of disappointment. At the beginning of his dream, the narrator has asked:

Can I not seyn if that the cause were  
For I hadde red of Affrican byforn,  
That made me to mete that he stod there . . .  
(PF, 106-08).

He ends by saying,

I hope ywis, to rede so som day  
That I shal mete som thyng for to fare  
The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare  
(PF, 698-700).

I find it difficult to understand the second "mete" as "meet" rather than dream. I think the narrator is saying that he now recognizes how his dream came about; it constituted a dramatization of his thoughts under the influence of his reading The Dream of Scipio. But it revealed a picture of the realm of love that is disquieting. Faced at the outset with a perspective (the "sterry place," PF, 43) which makes the earth and its concerns "lytel" (PF, 57), meeting



in his dream a temple of Venus which leaves him wishing for solace, finding the representative of the courtly outlook (for whom love is a great lord), thwarted in finding a mate while the lower birds who enjoy love include elements which made the parliament unruly, the dreamer hears a harmonious roundel, but awakes to "shoutyng" (PF, 693). Yet, he tells us, he knows the technique for trying again. He intends to read further to stimulate his imagination to further dreaming in which he may fare better than he has so far in obtaining a view of love that satisfies him.

#### The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women

If we want direct testimony from Chaucer about how he regards demands for dream verisimilitude, we may look to the two versions of the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. In version F, to take one instance, the small fowls sing defiance of the fowler and praise of Saint Valentine outside the dream; in G they sing the same inside the dream. The song then is not in itself attached to dream verisimilitude. It would not be surprising if that conclusion could be generalized throughout Chaucer's work. Heatt indicates that some instances in medieval poetry can be explained only as responses to the demand for dream imitation; but it is doubtful that an adequate demonstration of that claim can be supplied. Heatt's claim is based on the understanding that dream means intra-psychic experience. For Chaucer, we have seen, the dream is also a telling. And to tell a



dream involves it with purposes beyond mere evocation of a sense of dreaming experience. I would not expect to exhaust those purposes in a given instance, but the existence of the fact needs to be recognized.

To assume in this case that the poem is not governed by an attempt to provide dream verisimilitude does not mean, however, that it does not utilize verisimilitude. For me, the dreamer's initial meeting with the god of Love carries the strangeness of dreaming experience. The dreamer, who can see, is unable to look upon the face of the god of Love because of its unnatural brightness:

But of his face I can not seyn the hewe;  
 For sikerly his face shon so bryghte  
 That with the glem astoned was the syghte;  
 A furlong-wey I myghte hym not beholde  
 (PLGW, G, 162-65).

At the same time, the dreamer feels that the god of Love, who is blind, is looking at him:

An al be that men seyn that blynd is he,  
 Algate me thoughte he myghte wel yse;  
 For sternely on me he gan beholde,  
 So that his lokynge doth myn herte colde  
 (PLGW, G, 169-72).

Hieatt as well as Tupper makes some comment about dreamlikeness in the poem, but she is primarily concerned with identification of Alceste in a way which leads away from the internal operations of the work which interest me here.

Tupper deals mostly with the F version, noting, for instance, the transformation of the daisy and its relationship to the sun (PLGW, F, 110-12) into a "vision of a sun-crowned love-deity of blinding brightness leading by the hand a daisy-lady





. . ." in lines 213-233;<sup>149</sup> the tydif's song asking mercy (PLGW, F, 154f.) as a foreshadowing of the dreamer's predicament with the god of Love; the narrator's kneeling before the daisy outside (PLGW, F, 115-18) and inside the dream (PLGW, F, 308).

Some further comments by Tupper lead, however, to a problem which has not, as far as I am aware, been discussed. Like Payne, to whose position I will refer in a moment, Tupper understands the narrator's preliminary comments as thoughts which precede the dream. Thus he is interested in transformations within the dream of "thoughts of the day."<sup>150</sup> But strictly speaking the dream-day is marked off from the narrator's opening presentation as an event of sometime in the past:

Whan passed was almost the month of May,  
And I hadde romed, al the someres day,  
The grene medewe, of which that I yow tolde . . .  
(PLGW, G, 89-91).

And he tells us that he knew the course of the dream before giving his account of it. The G text is more explicit in details, but the general idea occurs in F as well:

But wherfore that I spak, to yeve credence  
To bokes olde and don hem reverence,  
Is for men shulde autoritees beleve,  
There as there lyth non other assay by preve.  
For myn entent is, or I fro yow fare,  
The naked text in English to declare  
Of many a story, or elles of many a geste,  
As autours seyn; leveth hem if yow leste!  
(PLGW, G, 81-88).

It would seem then that we should reverse the relationship Tupper has in mind and see the preliminary comments as consequences of the narrator's dream experience.



In that case, instead of finding with Tupper that the poet is "anticipating the self-sacrifice of Alceste who went to hell for her Lord"<sup>151</sup> when he refers to heaven and hell in the opening lines (3-6), we may find that the poet thinks of heaven and hell, at least in part, because he has dreamed about Alceste who "for hire husbonde ches to dye,/ And ek to gon to helle rather than he . . ." (PLGW, G, 501f.) and who was brought "out of helle ageyn to blys" (PLGW, G, 504). Within the dream, the god of Love has berated the poet for relying on the wrong books in translating The Romance of the Rose and in writing Troilus and Criseyde. Concerning the latter, the god of Love challenges:

Was there no good matere in thy mynde,  
Ne in alle thy bokes me couldest thow nat fynde  
Som story of wemen that were goode and trewe?  
(PLGW, G, 270-72).

He reminds the poet:

Yis, God wot, sixty bokes olde and newe  
Hast thow thyself, alle ful of storyes grete,  
That bothe Romainys and ek Grekes trete  
Of sundry wemen, which lyf that they ladde,  
And evere an hundred goode ageyn oon badde  
(PLGW, G, 273-77).

And he uses a grain metaphor to point the poet to his duty:

But yit, I seye, what eyleth the to wryte  
The draf of storyes, and forgete the corn?  
(PLGW, G, 311f.).

That leaves the waking poet to consider not merely the value of books in general, but also the selection of the proper stories from books:

Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,  
Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in mynde,  
And to the doctryne of these olde wyse



Yeven credence, in every skylful wyse,  
 And trowen on these olde aproved storyes  
 Of holynesse, of regnes, of victoryes,  
 Of love, of hate, of othere sondry thynges,  
 Of which I may nat make rehersynges  
 (PLGW, G, 17-24).

Later he recalls the god of Love's metaphor in apologizing for his meagre abilities in relation to other poets:

For wel I wot that folk han here-beforn  
 Of makynge ropen, and lad away the corn  
 (PLGW, G, 6lf.).

For Payne's case the question of relationship in time between the opening lines and the dream may be more easily overlooked. Like Tupper, Payne seems to treat the dream as occurring later in time than the opening remarks of the narrator; Payne's emphasis, however, is not on transformation of surface details of waking experience into dream images, but rather on the dream as a mode of presenting an underlying thought pattern. The dream, says Payne, is "a vision which figuratively re-enacts and develops to new tension the thematic problems of the introduction,"<sup>152</sup> by which he means especially reconciliation of books and experience or, more fully, of "knowledge, tradition, experience, and art."<sup>153</sup> As Payne explains it, the preliminaries and the dream are "closely correlated treatments, the first discursive, the second figurative and symbolic, of a common primary theme, the art of poetry."<sup>154</sup> In one respect, at least, the dream marks an advance over waking considerations of the narrator, as Payne sees it. In the balade which the company of ladies sings to Alceste (in the G version only), Payne finds what





he calls "recognition of a possible identity of experience, vision, and books . . . ." <sup>155</sup> To the extent that we think of thematic action, it is perhaps possible to disregard the fact that the dream has taken place before the poem opens. That is, we may consider only that the poet states a theme of concern about books and experience to open the poem and restates the theme again in the dream section of the poem. But if, as Payne seems to do, we wish to think of the dream as the last word in a temporal succession of considerations, it is necessary to reconsider the situation.

Of primary interest here from Payne's presentation is not the detail of his intricate treatment of the Prologue, but rather his basic premise that the dream represents an imaginative treatment of the narrator's thoughts. Rephrasing it for emphasis on Chaucer's manipulation of the dream, the dream section dramatizes a pattern of concern on the part of the narrator. Whether or not we understand the dream to follow or precede the narrator's opening comments, that condition would seem to hold. In one case, the dream could be said to spell out the waking preoccupations of the narrator; in the other, it could be said to make clear to the narrator what his concerns are. What does not seem permitted by the time relationship is such a comment as Payne makes concerning the dreamer's failure to recognize Alceste:

She is the figure from ancient legend who unites books, vision, and actuality, but (after all the talk about traditional knowledge in the introduction) he has forgotten the old book back home in his chest, in which he might have looked her up. <sup>156</sup>

But as we have seen, the narrator does not first talk about



books and then enter into his dream. He has dreamed some-time in the past and with that dream in mind, he talks about books in the introductory section of the Prologue.

As Payne amply demonstrates in his chapter on the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women, the work is a complex one. But for purposes of attending to the dream as dream, it is perhaps best to regard it as simply as possible. From that point of view the dream is a story about how the poet came to write the legends. As dream experience it reflects such concerns about writing as Payne deals with, and it is further tied to the narrators' imaginative perceptions by at least some of the details of experience that Tupper mentions. A question remaining about the nature of the dream is the authority with which it is invested.

Critics have labelled the dream in different ways. Without discussing his assumption Payne takes it for granted that the dreams of the dream visions are to be understood as revelatory.<sup>157</sup> Curry refers the dream to no higher powers than the dreamer in finding it to be a somnium animale.<sup>158</sup> Higgs contrasts this dream vision with other dream visions on the basis of the presence of gods: "In the previous dream-poems he had been forced to no conclusions, and there had been no message to bring back from the gods."<sup>159</sup> (But in saying so, Higgs is alert to ironies which undercut authority--a point to which I will return). It may be added that the dream concerns the poet's future, not by means of a forecast, but by means of an order about what to do: the



poet-dreamer is to write tales in honor of love. Since the order comes from figures of authority, the dream may be called oracular. In support of any of these views (including Curry's understanding of the somnium animale) some internal marking of the dream as true would provide useful guidance. I am unable to find any such mark. The dreamer makes no direct claim about the truth of the dream whatsoever, not even an ambiguous one. The prophetic time of morning that Bloomfield mentions is missing. As is usual for Chaucer the time of the dream is the time appropriate for the dreamer's circumstances. Having spent the day in the field, the narrator retires when

The soone out of the south gan weste,  
And closed was the flour, and gone to reste,  
For derknesse of the nyght, of which she dredde  
(PLGW, G, 93-95).

The narrator is asleep "withinne an hour or two . . ." (PLGW, G, 103).

For an oracular dream, internal qualities would seem to be especially significant in establishing the dream as authentically revelatory. That is, the oracular figures could be expected to bring with them a numinous impressiveness which would lead the dreamer to surmise that his dream was not mere fantasy. How then do the god of Love and Alceste appear within the dream? The two versions of the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women offer somewhat differing degrees of authority. It is a question of religious overtones. D. D. Griffith found that the G version avoids "the most noticeable analogies to Christian worship," but that a





religious system (that is, one in which the religion of love is made comparable with Christianity) retains "its god, its mediator and intercessor (Alceste), its saints, its legends, its martyrs, its relic, and its shrine with a system of repentance, penance and satisfaction."<sup>160</sup> John Gardner's careful reading alters that view somewhat. He finds a "slightly more elevated characterization of the god of Love" in the G version together with a change in presentation of the dreamer--"a comically simple-minded worshipper" of love in F, but a "narrator who, stupidly, is not a worshipper" in G, 605.<sup>161</sup> But in any event there remains a question of ironic presentation of the god of Love and even of Alceste which serves to undercut authority.

I want to indicate only a few instances which serve to question the message which the dreamer receives. As Paull F. Baum points out, the accusation made by the god of Love against the dreamer is of questionable merit:

Since the extant MS of RR is not certainly Chaucer's we must suppose for the sake of the argument that he did at least translate parts of the Roman which were unfavorable to women. The Troilus is more difficult to account for, since obviously Chaucer could sustain his contention that the story of Criseyde and her unhappy end was a warning of unfaithful women, and a fortiori he could insist that Troilus was a paragon of fidelity, a notable honor in the worship of Love.<sup>162</sup>

But it is not necessary to consider other poems to discover something dubious in the encounter. The task assigned, as Baum points out, contains what appears to be a contradiction. The poet is told to "Speke wel of love" (480), but Alceste specifies that he is to write tales which show women true in love and men false:



Now wol I seyn what penaunce thow shalt do  
 For thy trespas, and understond it here:  
 Thow shalt, whil that thow livest, yer by yere,  
 The moste partye of thy tyme spende  
 In makynge of a glorious legende  
 Of goode women, maydenes and wyves,  
 That were trewe in lovyng al here lyves;  
 And telle of false men that hem betrayen,  
 That al here lyf ne don nat but assayen  
 How manye wemen they may don a shame;  
 For in youre world that is now holden game  
 (PLGW, G, 469-79).

Beyond that we may note Alceste's own refusal to listen to the dreamer for whom she is interceding, and the arbitrariness she attributes to the god of Love in doing so:

And she answerde, "Lat be thyn arguynge,  
 For Love ne wol not counterpletyd be  
 In ryght ne wrong; and lerne this at me!"  
 (PLGW, G, 465-67).

Alceste's "defense" of the poet does suggest that the god of Love may be misinformed ("Al ne is nat gospel that is to you playned;/ The god of Love hereth many a tale yfeyned," PLGW, G, 326f.), but she does not clearly deny that the poetry which the god of Love names is harmful. To excuse the dreamer of malice, she is willing to substitute dullness or obsequiousness:

Or elles, sire, for that this man is nyce,  
 He may translate a thyng in no malyce,  
 But for he useth bokes for to make,  
 And taketh non hed of what matere he take,  
 Therefore he wrot the Rose and ek Crisseyde  
 Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde.  
 Or hym was boden make thilke tweye  
 Of som persone, and durste it not withseye;  
 For he hath write many a bok er this  
 (PLGW, G, 340-48).

During the course of her plea, she indicates that the dreamer is too insignificant to merit a severe sentence. The god of Love already has likened the dreamer to a worm, saying "For



it were better worthi, trewely,/ A worm to comen in my syght  
than thow" (PLGW, G, 243f.). Alceste suggests the dreamer  
is no more than a fly to the god of Love's lion:

For lo, the gentyl kynde of the lyoun!  
For whan a flye offendeth hym or byteth,  
He with his tayl away the flye smyteth  
Al esyly . . .

(PLGW G, 377-80).

With the F version in mind, Gardner comments that "the god  
of Love is characterized, ironically enough, as mean and  
vengeful, also pretentious in that he does not really have  
the omniscience he claims to have," and he adds, "Alceste  
is almost as fierce as the God."<sup>163</sup>

The god of Love and Alceste then would appear rather  
to be forceful characters than convincingly numinous ones.  
As such they do not seem to be guarantors of truthful revela-  
tion by higher powers. It seems to me that if the dream is  
taken to present itself as revelatory or oracular, then the  
poem exhibits a quite aggressive irony against the religion  
of love. If, instead of transcribing for us a heavenly  
inspired revelation, the narrator recounts a dream stemming  
from his own imaginative apprehensions, irony remains but is  
less severe. From that perspective it is less surprising  
than it would be for a revelatory dream to find the poem  
ending with what Payne calls, not a solution to the problems  
he posits, but a "paralyzing system of ironies."<sup>164</sup> From  
that perspective the narrator is not the recipient of an  
objectively oracular message. "Me mette" and "me thoughte,"  
the poet tells us, reminding us that he has undergone an







imaginative adventure which reveals potentialities of his own thought. The dream leaves him with motivation for writing some tales, but simultaneously indicates a mild ironic resistance in relationship to Love and the task assigned.

### Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to comment on each dream incident and narrative in Chaucer's poems in a manner which both integrates the dream in poetic context and explicates the idea of the dream as a telling. I have attempted to show, dream by dream, both that the dream responds to demands of telling and that it excites interest in some manner of man's dreaming experience. The dream has a verbal character--as a poem in some cases, as a story of varying sorts in others--which is responsive to a teller who sometimes has a specific purpose and a specific audience in mind. Its manner of telling (considering that as abstractly as possible from dream in other senses of the word) is important for that teller. The dream also has a character as that which evokes dreamlike qualities, which constitutes an experience standing in psychological relationship to the dreamer, and which arouses questions authorities have asked about actual dreams in the Middle Ages. I have attempted to keep both lines of significance in view while indicating at least something about the contribution each dream may be said to make to its poem.



## CONCLUSION

I have attempted to detail an exploration; the study has not followed a strictly deductive course. I set out to find the answer to a question: what is Chaucer's concept of the dream? Analytically it seemed to me that the question entailed trying to follow Chaucer's guidance, looking for a unified pattern of thought, and discussing what could commonly be thought of as the dream. Research indicated to me I should preserve some qualities of exploration in presenting results, instead of merely arguing from a set of conclusions. In general it is, at best, difficult to discuss the dream. We bring differing expectations to the subject matter. To add that the dream is a literary one compounds difficulties. And so to speak of the dream in an environment dominated by critical interests in the dream vision form of Chaucer's poems is, at least initially, necessarily confusing. Moreover the dream in Chaucer in particular calls for probing and questioning; it resists being rigidly restrained. I have tried to preserve qualities of exploration in presentation, then, because the subject matter is problematic and because Chaucer's concept of the dream, as I develop it here, is quite unfamiliar. In one way or another, critics have written a great deal about dreams in Chaucer; but no combination of their views, that I am aware of, produces the concept that I have tried to reveal here. There may be a number of more or less accidental reasons for that; an essential one is that the critical views I know about are based on perceptions of some segment of Chaucer's dreams



and Chaucer's dream vocabulary, rather than on some perception of the whole. Even if a combination of critical comments touched on all dreams and all uses of dream words in Chaucer, they would represent a combination of segments, not a standpoint of the whole. (I hasten to add that what I am calling segmental views may well contribute to our understanding of the dream in Chaucer; and that what I am calling a whole view is not a complete one. My own study itself has, of course, proceeded within a number of limitations). For these reasons I have tried to supply what I could of both evidence and the procedures of thinking relevant for dealing with the dream concept, and to define problems as they have arisen.

The study, then, has been an exploratory one, both into Chaucer's poems and into the critical literature concerning them and into a general body of medieval and earlier literature, poetic and otherwise learned, which seemed to bear on points under consideration. The exploration has produced a large number of decisions and conclusions--some minor and some, at least for purposes of this study, major--as I worked through particular features and tried to reach underlying patterns. Concerning Chaucer's vocabulary, I concluded, for example, that the terms of Chaucer's dream vocabulary are not firmly assigned to meanings determined by external systems of dream classification; that in metaphoric uses and through verbal associations the dream is treated as imaginative activity (within a range of





senses indicated); and that contexts for dream terms reveal interests in dream significance, experiential character and relation to poetic accounts.

In the second chapter, I examined several prominent ways of treating the dream which seemed to me to be reductive; that is, to exhibit a tendency to settle for a rigid explanation too simple for Chaucer's complex and supple interests. I questioned specifically whether proper use of Macrobius was being made by critics who rely on his authority for showing that dream visions, Chaucer's among them, are to be understood as allegories of a particular sort and I concluded generally that it is inadequate to think of the dream in Chaucer as merely an allegorical instrument. I suggested that instead of thinking of the dream as an authenticating device, it is more accurate to think of it as requiring authentication which it then may lend to a tale. To Curry, I devoted considerable attention since his treatment of medieval dream lore has been so very influential. Despite its value in alerting us to medieval dream materials, it gives, as I tried to explain, a misleading picture, by claiming a total agreement and simplicity where there was at least a certain element of disagreement and diversity. Since Chaucer's poems emphasize disagreement and diversity concerning the dream, Curry's view seemed to be distorting for Chaucer especially. Curry's term somnium animale I found to be one that should be avoided until a more exact understanding of its implications can be produced and



explained.

In the final chapter I attempted to bring together findings and questions developed in earlier study. I presented some literary account of each dream incident or narrative and attempted to disclose the fundamental structure of the dream as it operates throughout the poems. For that purpose, I tried to develop implications of the dream as told and as something that is told. Chaucer uses a variety of dream patterns, such as the journey of the soul and the divine message. His favorite dream style is the psychological event. In none of the cases examined do the dreams appear as devices severed from general human interest in dreaming experience. And in the dream visions, the dream element does not appear to be a mere frame, but rather a framework which supports poetic construction throughout.

All literary dreams have a verbal character. Some of them additionally have a character which arouses the reader to bring to bear what he knows of actual dreams. Simultaneously, I tried to show Chaucer's dreams as verbal processes responding to demands of individual situations and to demands of individual tellers and of Chaucer as the poetic teller of all; and to show Chaucer's dreams as responding to interest in actual dreams. Chaucer's dreams do not appear simply as attempts to give the reader a feeling of dreaming. Chaucer shifts emphasis as he wishes from the dream as poem, to the dream as psychological event, to the dream as imitation of dreaming surface quality. But by including



discussions of dream theories within the poems, by establishing a relationship between the dreamer and his dream on the basis of imaginative extension or complication of the dreamer's thoughts, drives and emotions, and by adding touches of dream verisimilitude, Chaucer invites the reader to bring what he knows about dreaming to the experience of the poems. I found Chaucer often to be reticent about providing clear and certain instruction about the nature and significance of his dreams. In the context of the approach employed here, that reticence appears as a contribution to the energy of poetic movement. In that complex of considerations affecting the fact and content of tellings, we reach, I think, the core of what can be called Chaucer's concept of the dream without doing violence either to Chaucer's poetry or to common language uses of the word dream. It is possible to refer to that concept abstractly, but by its nature it must be viewed in poetic context.

Beyond direct attention to the dream lies an indefinite range of contexts to which the dream interest might be related. What I hope to have offered here is some sense of what the basic subject matter is in this case, by describing the concept of the dream, viewing its integrations in poems and discussing some of the approaches to it. I hope also to have shown a need for greater attentiveness to what Chaucer's works say in themselves about the dream as balance against assumptions based on regularities discovered elsewhere. All reading of literature entails transactions





between expectations and what is in the poems, and it is sometimes necessary to step back from a work to notice certain contours. But the twists, the peculiarities, the qualifications must come from closer inspection, and I have tried to move toward that. Finally, the study has indicated a need for more rounded treatment of the dream than one is usually offered. Questions of a dream's truth, its cause, its types, its affiliations, its functions, its basic nature, the language with which it is presented, need to come together with each other and the poetic context before a satisfactory estimate of the dream in Chaucer can be made.



## FOOTNOTES



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### Footnotes to Introduction:

<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey Tillotson states in his article, "Dreams in English Literature" (The London Mercury, 27, no. 162 (1933), 516): "Unless the writer is actually recording a dream, or referring directly to the experience of dreaming, he uses the word with the knowledge that its primary annotation will be suspended." Part of Tillotson's argument for saying so, however, points up a difficulty in judging the relevance of actual dreaming experience to literary dreams. "A real dream may be passionate," he says. "It is intense, exhaustingly comic or a nightmare. But one never has a dream that can be thought pleasant and nothing more." Yet, he implies, the dream in a poem may mean something pleasant only. I can think of no reason to take Tillotson's word for what people may not dream. Personal "feel" for dream quality would seem to be a variable that critics might well take into account.

<sup>2</sup>For the most part, comments on dream functions appear in critical works having other concerns as well. A number of these will be cited in later discussion. Criseyde's dream is the sole concern, however, of insightful comments by Charles A. Owen, Jr. in "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, II. 925-31," Explicator, IX (1951), item 26.

<sup>3</sup>Wilbur Owen Sypherd's Studies in Chaucer's Hous of Fame (London, 1907. Chaucer Soc., 2nd Series, no. 39.) established a general indebtedness of Chaucer's dream poems to French sources. Critics have differed both about specific ingredients of that indebtedness and the extent of its importance. James Wimsatt's recent study, Chaucer and the French Love Poets (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Pr., 1968), for instance, denies that dream poems constitute an independent category in the manner Sypherd indicated (125).

<sup>4</sup>Walter Clyde Curry's chapters on dreams in Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960) have been widely used in explaining Chaucer's dreams. Francis X. Newman applies to a wider base of dream studies as a background for medieval poets, including Chaucer in his Princeton dissertation of 1963, Somnium: Medieval Theories of Dreaming and the Form of Vision Poetry (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1967).





<sup>5</sup>Beryl Rowland has been among those active in such studies with articles as "The Whelp in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess," (Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 66 (1965), 148-60) and "Owls and Apes in Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale," (Mediaeval Studies, 27 (1965), 322-25). John Block Friedman finds a different significance for the whelp in "The Dreamer, the Whelp and Consolation in The Book of the Duchess," (Chaucer Review, 3 (1969), 145-62).

<sup>6</sup>Edward Charles Ehrensperger included accounts of such matters as who dreamers are and where and when they dream in his dissertation, Dreams in Middle English Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921).

<sup>7</sup>Sypherd (Studies in Chaucer's Hous of Fame) and Newman (Somnium) make different appraisals of the dream vision form, as we will see in later discussion.

<sup>8</sup>Elton Higgs is concerned in part with the relation of the dreamer to his dream in his dissertation, The Dream as a Literary Framework in the Works of Chaucer, Langland and the Pearl Poet (Diss). (Pittsburgh, 1965), and there are numerous articles which discuss the role of the narrator of the dream visions from one perspective or another.

<sup>9</sup>Bertrand H. Bronson gives particular emphasis to the importance of interplay between dreams and books in the chapter "In and Out of Dreams," in In Search of Chaucer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960). Robert O. Payne explores more fully aesthetic implications of relationships among dreams, experience and authority, in several chapters of The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

<sup>10</sup>Curry (Chaucer), Ehrensperger (Dreams), Wilhelm Baake, Die Verwendung des Traummotivs in der englischen Dichtung bis auf Chaucer (Halle, 1906) and Constance B. Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions (The Hague: Mouton, 1967) all have comments covering some range of dreams in Chaucer. For the most part they are concerned with the important, but limited, matters of causality and truthfulness in the case of incidental dreams. I must also note, with some reluctance, an article entitled "Dreams in Chaucer" by Govind Narayan Sharma (Indian Journal of English Studies, 6 (1965), 1-18). Sharma's work is so heavily indebted to that of other critics (Curry and Kittredge among others) for topics, the flow of ideas, examples, citations and phrasing that it is difficult to take seriously.

<sup>11</sup>The question of truth is central for the argument



of Morton W. Bloomfield in "Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer" (Thought, 39 (1964), 335-58), but is of importance elsewhere as well.

<sup>12</sup>One of the most balanced assessments of the dream in Chaucer is, I believe, provided by Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry (Trans. C. A. M. Sym. London: Methuen, 1963). In a few pages, discussing The Book of the Duchess, Clemen touches on the relevance of specific dream lore, the sense of dream verisimilitude, the question of whether Chaucer tries to establish that his dreams are true, contrasts with other poetic practices, and emphasis on the poetic functions Chaucer found for dreams.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) views the service of the dream in a structure of symbolic meanings as being in opposition to dream verisimilitude (102). Dorothy Bethurum emphasizes the role of the dream in relating the poet to his material in her article, "Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems" (PMLA, 74 (1959), 511-20) (cf. 512ff.).

<sup>14</sup>For Sypherd (Studies) the dream is subsumed by the dream vision form in the service of discussing love.

<sup>15</sup>Bernard F. Huppe and D. W. Robertson, Jr., regard the dream as a means of announcing a type of allegory serving moral and religious purposes, in Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

<sup>16</sup>George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and his Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harcourt University Press, 1946) helped open the topic of dream verisimilitude in Chaucer without recourse to particular authorities for the understanding of dreams (68).

<sup>17</sup>Curry (Chaucer) and Newman (Somnium), as I indicated before, appeal to overlapping but differing sets of authorities.

<sup>18</sup>Hieatt (Realism) has offered an extensive though perhaps somewhat questionable treatment of verisimilitude in Chaucer's poems by means of appeal to a few of important theorists of twentieth century dream psychology.



## Footnotes to Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Dreams in Middle English Literature. Ehrensperger compares terms, attitudes and special contents for dreams throughout Middle English writings. From his article, "Dream Words in Old and Middle English," PMLA, 46 (1931), 80-89, we may take a brief summary of Middle English terminology: "Leaving out of consideration a few nouns which occur only a few times (such as revelacioun, aperans, shewynge, oracle, metels, dremeles, fantom, miracle), we have three nouns which are frequently used for dream: (1) sweven (369 times), (2) vision (184 times), (3) dreme (430 times)" (81).

<sup>2</sup>The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Ed. F. N. Robinson (2nd ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). References to this work will always be given within the body of this study.

<sup>3</sup>A second and influential alternative to understanding Chaucer's dream narrative through dream lore is that offered by Curry. He makes certain comments about vocabulary, some of which I will comment on here; but essentially his explanation is not tied to terminology. I will examine Curry's proposals at some length in Chapter II.

<sup>4</sup>"Hous of Fame. 7-12," English Language Notes, 6 (1968), 5-12.

<sup>5</sup>Ten Brink, Chaucer: Studien zur Geschichte seiner Entwicklung und zur Chronologie seiner Schriften (Münster, 1870), 101. Ten Brink tells us that the difference he notes for "drem" and "sweven" is "nicht ganz festgestellt," and offers a single exception: "Im eingang des Romaunt of the rose übersetzt er songe bald durch swevene oder (im reime) swevenyng, bald durch dreme" (101). That implies both that meanings for the other terms are stable in Chaucer's works and that Ten Brink expects few exceptions for the distinction between "drem" and "sweven."

<sup>6</sup>Ehrensperger, Dreams, 29.

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 8.

<sup>9</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 9.

<sup>10</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 12.

<sup>11</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 11.

<sup>12</sup>ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 9.







<sup>14</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 6f.

<sup>15</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 10.

<sup>16</sup>Newman makes the reasonable assumption that the cause for true dreams in Macrobius is the inherent prophetic power of the soul and cites as evidence a number of passages concerning Macrobius' understanding of the soul (Newman, Somnium, 73f.). At only one point, however, does Macrobius directly name the soul's power as a means of securing true dreams. He does so by quoting another authority and in order to explain a specific reference (Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Trans. William Harris Stahl. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), I, 3, 91f.). Macrobius' procedure leaves some doubt in my mind about whether he means to claim the prophetic soul as the only source of true dreams, or as one such source. Later discussions will recur to the general question of how dream sources may be related to truth value.

<sup>17</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 2, 88.

<sup>18</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 3, 88.

<sup>19</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 4, 88f.

<sup>20</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 5, 89.

<sup>21</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 7, 89.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 8, 90.

<sup>24</sup>ibid. Stahl's word "clearly" here is Macrobius' "aperte" (Macrobius, Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis. Ed. Iacobus Willis. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963), I, iii, 8, 10).

<sup>25</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 10, 90.

<sup>26</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 9, 90.

<sup>27</sup>Macrobius, Somnium, I, iii, 9, 10.

<sup>28</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 9, 90.

<sup>29</sup>Macrobius, Dream, III, 7, 89.

<sup>30</sup>Curry, Chaucer, 209.

<sup>31</sup>Aristotle's De Anima in the Version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas. Trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 399.



<sup>32</sup>Summa Theologiae. Ed. Petrus Caramello (Rome: Marietti, 1952-56), and Summa Theologica. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger, 1947-48), I, 84, 8; (both works will henceforth be referred to as: St. Thomas, plus passage identifications).

<sup>33</sup>St. Thomas, I, 84, 8.

<sup>34</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Hazelton, "Chaucer and Cato," Speculum, 35 (1960), 369. He adds that Gregory's schema was picked up by "all the glossulae on Cato's Sompnia ne cures . . .," the phrase Pertelote translates.

<sup>36</sup>Gregory's classification appears in his Opera Omnia, III. in: Jacques Paul Migne ed., Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina (Paris: 1844-64), LXXVII, cap. XLVIII, col. 409. I will have more to say about it later in discussing The House of Fame passage from a different perspective in Chapter II.

<sup>37</sup>Migne ed., Patrologia Latina, XXXIV, Liber XII, IX, 20. To find my way through St. Augustine's Latin, I made use of Augustinus Aurelius, Psychologie und Mystik (De Genesi ad Litteram, 12). Ed. and Trans. Matthias E. Korerger and Hans Urs von Balthasar (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960).

<sup>38</sup>De Genesi ad Litteram, IX, 20.

<sup>39</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>I have been unable to determine a difference in Chaucer's uses between "avisoun" and "visioun." Jean Froissart, in "Tresor Amoureux" (Oeuvres. Ed. M. Aug. Scheler. Bruxelles: Devaux, 1870-72, III), plays with a distinction between "advisoun" as designation for an experience and "vision" as the name for what takes place in the experience; but, if the manuscript is accurate, he does not hold the distinction consistently; sometimes he writes "vision" which is had in "vision." See, for instance, ll. 783f., "la tres doulce vision/ Que j'avoie eue en vision," together with variations in ll. 510f.

<sup>41</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 6f.

<sup>42</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 7, FN 5.

<sup>43</sup>Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in the House of Fame (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 46. I do not intend to consider whether The House of Fame is an allegory in the sense in which Koonce understands it, because doing so would lead away from purposes of my



study. My immediate interest here is with the significance of the term "avisoun." At the same time I am concerned about the theoretical construction of Koonce's view in this way: If it were sufficiently convincing, Koonce's proposal would permit us to say that Chaucer establishes an allegorical intention by means of his dream vocabulary. In that way an allegorical dimension would not be merely a discovery a reader could make in Chaucer's poems, but a factor in Chaucer's presentation of the dream. While there may be other grounds for understanding The House of Fame as allegory, I do not see that Chaucer insists that we think so either by the way he uses dream words or, to anticipate, by the way the narrator discusses the dream. I will further discuss both allegorical approaches allied to Koonce's and treatment of the dream in The House of Fame later on. In any event, Macrobius' visio is not allegorical in character.

<sup>44</sup>Koonce, 50, FN 9.

<sup>45</sup>Koonce, 54, FN 18.

<sup>46</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 7.

<sup>47</sup>Koonce, 47.

<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Koonce, 50, FN 9.

<sup>50</sup>St. Thomas, III, 7, 8.

<sup>51</sup>St. Thomas, II-II, 173, 3.

<sup>52</sup>Koonce, 52, FN 15.

<sup>53</sup>Joannis Saresberiensis, "Polycraticus," in Opera Omnia. Ed. Migne, Patrologia Latina. Tomus CXCIX, Liber II, XVI, 433.

<sup>54</sup>Curry, 206.

<sup>55</sup>Joseph B. Pike, Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers, Being a Translation of the First, Second and Third Books . . . of the Polycraticus of John of Salisbury (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), 78.

<sup>56</sup>Joannis Saresberiensis, XV, 430.

<sup>57</sup>Pike, 78.

<sup>58</sup>Joannis Saresberiensis, XV, 430.





<sup>59</sup>Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose. Ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris, 1914), II, 6574ff.

<sup>60</sup>Le Roman de la Rose, II, 6583.

<sup>61</sup>Koonce, 54, FN 18.

<sup>62</sup>Chaucer's claims about his dream visions is a topic that I will pursue in later chapters. There are, I think, good grounds for thinking that Chaucer avoids restrictive identification of the nature of his dreams in general.

<sup>63</sup>Joannis Saresberiensis, III, 12.

<sup>64</sup>A Concordance to the Complete Work of Geoffrey Chaucer and to The Romaunt of the Rose, by John S. P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1927) notes variant reading of "avisions" and "visions" for HF, I, 40.

<sup>65</sup>Curry, 202.

<sup>66</sup>Curry, 215f.

<sup>67</sup>As a possible influence on the Summoner's story, Robinson (706), in a note on the Summoner's prologue, refers to a tale similar but of "contrary import" in Heisterbach. Caesar of Heisterbach is of further interest in this case in showing how close dream is to ecstasy. Heisterbach tells his novice of instances in which men are rapt by visions ("per visum . . . raptus"). In one case he is sure a vision took place in sleep but mentions that a similar one could have occurred either in sleep or ecstasy (Dialogus Miraculorum, ed. Joseph Strange. Köln: Heberle, 1851, repr. 1966, II, viii, 2, 82).

<sup>68</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 10.

<sup>69</sup>ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 10f.

<sup>71</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales (New York: Holt, 1928), 634, note to line B 4112.

<sup>72</sup>The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 52: "Chaucer himself would read his Macrobius attentively, not only because it interpreted the work of an 'auctorite' but also because that work was a somnium--the special kind of dream that veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information offered," Bennett tells us. Of Chaucer's dream, Bennett writes, "Chaucer presents it as his own somnium ('sweven') . . ." (53).



Bennett does not say why he thinks the word "sweven" is a suitable one for translating *somnium*. He could, I suppose, be thinking of an etymological relationship, but may, perhaps, mean only to claim that the dream of *The Parliament of Fowls* is an enigmatic one. In this study, I do not deal with etymologies, since I find no internal indication about how to regard etymology for Chaucer's dream terms. It may be noted in passing, however, that "sweven" from OE. *swef(e)n* (Old Norse, *svefn*) is parallel to the Latin *somnium*, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains it. Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn (*Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956ff.) explain "drem" as a "blend of OE *dream* joy, etc. & ON (cp. OI *draumr* a dream)." About the Norse borrowing there seems to be no problem, but the relationship of the Old English word to Middle English uses presents a difficulty. Kurath and Kuhn state: "Although OE *dream* in the sense 'dream' is not attested, this meaning may have existed . . . ." There are then two words "drem" in Middle English. One means joy and sound etc.; the second is used in the senses dream, day dream, vision during sleep etc., which are the ones in question in this study.

<sup>73</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 10.

<sup>74</sup>Joannis Saresberiensis, XV, 432.

<sup>75</sup>William Langland (*The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*. Ed. Walter W. Skeat. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886, IA, viii, 246) uses the term "songewarie" in context of the same Cato material, not "drem." Awakened from his own dream, Will considers attitudes about dreams in general. At one point he says:

Ac I haue no sauoure in songewarie, for I se it ofte faille;

Catoun and canonistres. conseillete vs to leue

To sette sadnesse in songewarie--for, sompnia ne cures  
(148-50).

In his study of Chaucer's use of Cato, Hazelton remarks in passing that a Middle English paraphrase, to which Chaucer may otherwise be indebted, uses different terminology from that of Pertelote. One reading is "To metynggis truste thou no kyn thyng . . . ." The Chaucer passage, he notes, "bears no resemblance to the language of the Copenhagen paraphrase nor to any other vernacular version" ("Chaucer and Cato," 361). On these grounds as well, Pertelote's choice of "drem" cannot be said to represent a necessity of translation.

<sup>76</sup>Newman's argument is not convincing at this point. He seems to feel that the less Chauntecleer uses the word "sweven" the better for showing what he means by "drem." But that is not the case. What is important is not the number of uses, but the content the words have which can be





related to Macrobius. There is, further, the dubious procedure of including verbal forms in a count showing that Chauntecleer is interested in "drem." Chaucer has no verbal form for "sweven" so that, even if he meant Chauntecleer to talk about the action of having a "sweven" rather than a "drem," he might write, "he dremed."

<sup>77</sup>As an analogue for the dream of Kenelm, Henry Barrett Hinckley (Notes on Chaucer: A Commentary on the Prolog and Six Canterbury Tales. New York: Haskell House, 1907, repr. 1964) suggests the account in The South English Legendary (Hinckley, 136, note to CT, B, 4300). In manuscripts edited for The Early English Text Society, The Legendary has only "sweuene" (116ff.). A more extended account than Chauntecleer's, it reveals symbolic content (a high tree climbed by Kenelm is cut down). Cf. The South English Legendary. Eds. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill (EETS, no. 235). (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), I, 283.

<sup>78</sup>I include references from CT, VII, 2979 through 3109.

<sup>79</sup>Robinson says (773) that Guillaume de Machaut's "La Fontaine Amoureuse" (in his Oeuvres, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (Paris: Didot, 1908-21), 565ff.) "apparently served, beside Ovid, as a subsidiary source, for the Alcione episode." Machaut does not specifically label the dream but refers to "songes" in a general way, while Ovid has somnia (Metamorphoses, trans. Frank Justus Miller. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956, Liber XI, 588).

<sup>80</sup>Macrobius, Somnium, I, iii, 6f., 9f. and Joannis Saresberiensis, XV, 429.

<sup>81</sup>Newman, "Hous of Fame," 12.

<sup>82</sup>Ehrensperger, Dreams, 18.

<sup>83</sup>Ehrensperger, Dreams, 27.

<sup>84</sup>Ehrensperger, Dreams, 18.

<sup>85</sup>Ehrensperger, Dreams, 19.

<sup>86</sup>What I am commenting on here is the particular matter of the relationship between dream typologies and Chaucer's terms. It does not seem that Chaucer relied on a single dream typology for dream lore, and it does not seem that a master list of terms from such a typology will explain the meaning of Chaucer's dream words. I do not mean that the task of distinguishing meanings or nuances among Chaucer's dream words is a hopeless one in principle. For example, "visioun" suggests visual emphasis and "oraculum" suggests oral message. There may be some suggestion of separation





of the soul from the body in the word "sweven" through its derivation from words which lead to NHG *schweben*, hover, as Baake indicates for Middle English in general (11); although I do not find a consistent association of "sweven" with release of the soul in Chaucer. There are isolated passages in which "sweven" seems to point to sleeping experience while "drem" is used for the poetic account of that experience. That happens in what is presumed to be Chaucer's portion of *The Romaunt of the Rose* (cf. lines 25f. with line 30). Again I find no consistent patterning for that case. But it may be that some other manner of investigation will disclose a number of interesting effects in Chaucer's dream words. My study here is not a free study of words in Chaucer. It is limited by the effort to pursue a question through what critics have to say about Chaucer's concept of the dream to what further guidance Chaucer provides.

<sup>87</sup>*Imagination* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 53.

<sup>88</sup>*Somnium*, 347.

<sup>89</sup>Curry, 205f.

<sup>90</sup>*The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1927). The brief account of imagination that I offer does not follow Bundy's methodology which entails consideration of historical developments and schools of thought. But I have utilized his work both for explanatory comments and for guidance to texts. My interest is less in the detailed conclusions of any thinker or school of thought than in the variety of possible perspectives they open up as a setting for pursuing Chaucer's interests. For the proposals which immediately follow, sufficient support will be provided in later materials quoted. But it may be added that all of them can be found suggested in Bundy's chapters II and III on Plato and Aristotle, whose theories, Bundy tells us, "are so basic for later thought that the generalization may be hazarded that every subsequent conception grows out of one or the other" (83).

<sup>91</sup>Bundy discusses such differences at several points, for instance 14f., 35f., 189f., 266 and 277f.

<sup>92</sup>St. Thomas, I, 84, 8.

<sup>93</sup>in: *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*. Trans. W. S. Hett (London: Heinemann, 1935), 458b, 346f.

<sup>94</sup>Aristotle, "On Dreams," 458b, 345ff.

<sup>95</sup>"The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *Harvard Theological Review*, 28 (1935), 96.



- <sup>96</sup>Epitome of Parva Naturalia. Trans. Harry Blumberg. Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristototelem. Ed. Henry Austryn Wolfson, VII, (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961), 48.
- <sup>97</sup>Averroes, 47.
- <sup>98</sup>Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), 36f.
- <sup>99</sup>Averroes, 47.
- <sup>100</sup>As quoted by Bundy, 39.
- <sup>101</sup>Bundy, 39.
- <sup>102</sup>in: The Dialogues of Plato. Trans. B. Jowett. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), III: Republic IX, 571f., 280f.
- <sup>103</sup>ibid.
- <sup>104</sup>"A Treatise on the Nature of Man," in: Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesis of Emesa. Ed. William Telfer (Library of Christian Classics, IV). (London: SCM Press, 1960) 338.
- <sup>105</sup>"A Treatise on the Nature of Man," 339, FN 3.
- <sup>106</sup>De Genesi ad Litteram, Liber XII, VI, 15.
- <sup>107</sup>De Genesi ad Litteram, Liber XII, XXIV, 797.
- <sup>108</sup>"Adnotationculae Elucidatoriae in Joelem Prophetam," in his Opera Omnia, in: Migne ed., Patrologia Latina, LXXV, IA, 356.
- <sup>109</sup>(2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1967), 2.
- <sup>110</sup>Lewis, 3.
- <sup>111</sup>Ford ed., The Age of Chaucer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 24.
- <sup>112</sup>Robinson, 754, FN to CT, VII, 3217.
- <sup>113</sup>"Chaucer: 'Heigh Ymaginacioun,'" Modern Language Notes, 69 (1954), 395. Bundy discusses the significance of Dante's "alta phantasia" on pages 339f.
- <sup>114</sup>Chaucer's Major Poetry (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), 377, FN to CT, B, 4407.



115 Kurath and Kuhn, Middle English Dictionary.

116 Albertus Magnus, "De Somno et Vigilia," in his Opera Omnia, ed. August Borgnet (Paris, 1890), IX, Liber III, ii, 9, 206. In "On Prophecy in Sleep" (in: On the Soul, 464a, 379ff.) Aristotle writes: "When anything stirs water or air, this in its turn causes movement, and when the first impulse has ceased, a similar movement still continues up to a point, though the first impulse is over; just in the same way there is nothing to prevent some movement and perception coming to souls that are asleep . . . ."

117 This case could be used to illustrate delusion, but some other instances exhibit delusion more purely, while this case, like the Miller's and the related Troilus and Criseyde passage, has additional value.

118 The mirror of the mind is one variation in a complex tradition of meanings for the mirror in the Middle Ages. Sister Ritamary Bradley discusses the tradition in (Speculum, 29 (1954), 100-115). Summing up some chief characteristics for the mirror of the mind and the mirror of the soul, Sister Bradley explains that "These types have in common the injunction to judge changing appearances in the light of the archetypal ideas . . . in a word, to seek after wisdom. Things seen by the bodily senses, likenesses of the corporeal . . . thought itself, the subjects of instruction . . . eternal truth, even vain and false things are mirrors if they are adapted to the understanding of God" (105). If not adapted to the understanding of God, the mirror becomes, as in the two Chaucer passages, a means of deception through preoccupation with the goods of this world. Frederick Goldin provides extended study of the mirror tradition in a work I have not had the opportunity to read through, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967). Citing a passage from St. Augustine, Goldin notes that in one way, "the mirror is the natural example of instability, passivity, delusiveness" (7).

119 Bundy, 109.

120 in: Moralia. Ed. and trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr., F. H. Sandbach and W. C. Helmbold (London: Heinemann, 1961), IX, 759, 367.

121 The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian. Trans. H. B. Butler (London: Heinemann, 1921), II, Book VI, ii, 29, 432f. The Latin "per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo" is rather literally, by which images of absent things are thus represented to the mind or soul.

122 Quintilian, Book VI, ii, 30f., 434f.







<sup>123</sup>Kurath and Kuhn, entry under "imagining," cite the example for "lying distortion" which is, no doubt, a consequence of the attitude complained about.

<sup>124</sup>Baugh, 39.

<sup>125</sup>In chapter II, I suggest that the medieval understanding of imagination as that which concretizes abstract thought (ranging as we have seen from the messages of intelligent spirits to whatever is an individual psychological experience) provides an analogy for the Freudian concept of dream dramatization.

<sup>126</sup>I mean such as the golden mountain St. Thomas uses as an instance for the imagination making a single new image from images already known (I, 12, 9).

Salisbury attributes the same activity directly to the understanding (intellectus), but context (in which sense, imagination and understanding are hierarchially ordered) suggests that he means to refer to the intellect as it employs the lesser faculties. In that sense, the understanding unites what is dissociated. "Poets convey such conceptions to their readers by means of words when they describe a goat-deer, a centaur, or a chimera," he explains (Pike, Frivolities, 87-90). Specific combinations or fusions of this sort may be noted in Chaucer's dream narratives.

<sup>127</sup>The terminology "objective dream" is in frequent use in the dream studies I have consulted, both by historians of the dream and by literary critics. What I attempt to do is to clarify the various senses in which that term may be understood. It may refer, for example, to an actual separation of the soul from the body for a spiritual adventure, to supernatural causation of a dream, to a visitation by an actual dream figure, to a general sense that the dream is something that happens to one's thought instead of being the product of one's own deliberate thought processes.

To clarify my practice in general, it may be helpful to comment on an objection Gudmund Björck makes against distinctions "entre les rêves 'internes' et 'externes'." Björck writes: "D'une part, ce n'est que par un acte d'abstraction logique que nous pouvons y voir un phénomène purement interne, d'autre part, la manière d'exposition des poètes n'est pas concluante: si ceux-ci mettent même en scène des figures rêvées . . . nous ne pensons pas pour cela à les charger d'une conception particulièrement externe et 'primitive'" ("De la perception de rêve chez les anciens," Eranos, 44 (1946), 311). Björck is concerned philosophically about what really is the case for a dream and he is concerned about what really is the belief of the poet who writes the dream. For my study, the poetic presentation is conclusive. To use Björck's vocabulary for a moment, an internal dream in this study is one which the poet presents as



psychological experience of the dreamer; an external dream is one which the poet presents as an event arranged by someone else (as a god) for the dreamer. Later, I will suggest that one may find gradations between these poles. In any event, my purpose is to describe the literary presentation of the dream in relation to the dreamer.

<sup>128</sup>Arnold, Die Verwendung des Traummotivs in der englischen Dichtung von Chaucer bis auf Shakespeare (Diss., Kiel, 1912), 6.

<sup>129</sup>Arnold's basic point seems to be concerned with what happens when a mythological explanation of dreams as objective incidents ceases to be the only understanding available. Then uncertainty about the source and significance of dreams arises, he indicates. In that setting, personal forms--Arnold quotes "I dreamed a dream"--seem to Arnold to reflect a "moderne Auffassung" opposed to impersonal ones which become reminders of that "was der Menscheng Geist in früheren Jahrhunderten mit Gestalten mythischen Dunkels erfüllt glaubte" (6). For the state of uncertainty about the origin and significance of dreams, Arnold cites lines from Lydgate's Troy Book which apparently adapt Chaucer's lines 7-11 from The House of Fame. Lydgate writes:

And she þat nyȝt, as made is mencioun,  
Hadde in hir slepe a wonder visioun,  
I not, in soth, what I may it nevene,  
Oþer a dreme or verrailly a sweuene,  
Or fro a-boue a reuelacioun,  
--As whilom had þe kyng Scipioun--  
Or a shewynge, oþer an oracle,  
Or a goddis a warnyng be myracle . . .

(Troy Book, ed. Henry Bergen. (London: Kegan Paul, 1906), 536f., Bk. III, 4909-16).

<sup>130</sup>Specific examples of such instances will be provided in Chapter II.

<sup>131</sup>I will discuss this instance in somewhat more detail in Chapter III.

<sup>132</sup>"The Two Prologues of the Legend of Good Women," JEGP, 67 (1968), 611.

<sup>133</sup>Robinson, 774, FN to BD, 293.

<sup>134</sup>Robinson, 793, FN to this passage.

<sup>135</sup>Studies in Medieval Culture, 1 (1964), 69-73.

<sup>136</sup>Perse, Satires. Ed. Leon Herrman (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1962), L, 9-10, 1.



<sup>137</sup> Since discussion has been complex, it may be helpful to note findings concerning each term of the basic dream vocabulary. "Visioun" and "avisoun" were found to designate a variety of dreaming experiences, and, as the words imply, to emphasize visual qualities of such experiences. They seem not to appear in metaphoric contexts as do "drem" and "sweven." "Drem" and "sweven" seem to be used indifferently to designate a variety of sleeping experiences. They also are used metaphorically in contexts which imply deception. "Dremen" and "meten" are used to announce dreaming experience, often in a manner which emphasizes imaginative activity. They also are used metaphorically to the same effect as "drem" and "sweven." Personal forms of the dream verbs do not seem to differ radically from impersonal forms, although the latter in themselves may more clearly imply that the dream is felt as an experience given to the dreamer.

#### Footnotes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Clemen, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Muscatine, 102.

<sup>4</sup> Koonce, for instance, though he has other interests in the dream, states: "The standard discussion of Chaucer's use of traditional dream material is in W. G. Curry's Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences . . . " (47, FN 3).

<sup>5</sup> Robinson, for example, uses Curry's term somnium animale in describing the dream of The Book of the Duchess (774, notes to lines 1-15). The trouble, as we will eventually see is that Robinson intends only to refer to psychological conditions and Curry means something more.

<sup>6</sup> Curry, 207.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Curry, 217.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Curry, 217f.

<sup>13</sup> Curry, 209f.







<sup>14</sup>Curry, 218.

<sup>15</sup>ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Curry, 233.

<sup>17</sup>Curry, 234.

<sup>18</sup>Curry also cites Galen, 223.

<sup>19</sup>Curry, 202.

<sup>20</sup>Curry, 207.

<sup>21</sup>Curry, 208.

<sup>22</sup>Curry, 217.

<sup>23</sup>Curry, 199.

<sup>24</sup>Curry, 209, and Pseudo-Augustine, De spiritu et anima. in: Patrologia Latina. Ed. Migne. XL, cap. XXV.

<sup>25</sup>Curry, 208.

<sup>26</sup>Curry, 218.

<sup>27</sup>Curry, 196.

<sup>28</sup>Koonce, 46.

<sup>29</sup>What I propose is not a general history of dream lore, though each of my chapters touches on elements of that history. What I attempt to do throughout this study is to arrange a suitable context for specific problems suggested initially by Chaucer's poems. Accounts of some points of dream theory (it would be hard to imagine thorough coverage in a single work) appear in several recent dissertations. Newman's, which is the most extensive I have seen, comments on a variety of dream theories, but emphasizes the importance of the tradition of the higher dream for Chaucer's works. Higgs' review emphasizes divisions of opinion among authorities. Higgs concludes that poets felt literary precedent rather than dream theory justified their use of a dream framework (12). Manfred Weidhorn provides a creditable account of early and later dream theories, but unfortunately relies on Curry's presentation for his understanding of medieval dream theory (Dreams in the Seventeenth-Century English Literature. Diss. New York: University of Columbia Press, 1963, 27-29). The difference in starting points--the general history of the dream in these cases as against Chaucer's comments or problems in his works for my case--and the complexity of the subject matter make little directly



transferable in our treatments. None of these three, for instance, explore implications of the dream as imaginative act. Among studies in dream history which I have found helpful beyond those cited elsewhere are those of N. Vaschide and H. Piéron, "Prophetic Dreams in Antiquity," Monist, 11 (1901), 161-94; Wolfgang Born, "A History of Dream Interpretation," Ciba Symposium, (1948), 926-39, and Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité (Paris: Leroux, 1879-82, 4 vols.).

<sup>30</sup>"Die sogenannte Fünfteilung der Träume bei Chalcidius und ihre Quellen," Mnemosyne, 7 (1941), 65-85.

<sup>31</sup>Waszink, 72.

<sup>32</sup>ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Timaeus: A Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus. Ed. J. H. Waszink. in: Plato latinus. Ed. Raymundus Klibansky et Carlotta Labowsky. (London: Warburg Institute, 1962), IV, cap. CCLVI, 265.

<sup>34</sup>Waszink, 82.

<sup>35</sup>Waszink, 83.

<sup>36</sup>Waszink's discussion is on 82f.; for Philo, I quote from: "On Dreams, That They are God-Sent (Quod a Deo mittantur somnia or De somniis)," in: Philo, with an English translation by F. H. Closon and G. H. Whitaker. (Loeb Classical Library). (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), V, 283-611.

<sup>37</sup>Philo, II, 2, 443.

<sup>38</sup>ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Philo, II, 1, 443.

<sup>40</sup>Averroes, Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). Trans. Simon van den Bergh. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954, 167.

<sup>41</sup>St. Thomas, I, 86, 4.

<sup>42</sup>Tertullian, "A Treatise on the Soul," trans. Peter Holmes. in: Anti-Nicene Fathers. Ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Scribners. 1903), III, 225, ch. XLVII.

<sup>43</sup>Tertullian, "Treatise," 226, ch. XLVII, Liber de Anima in: Migne ed., Patrologia Latina, II, col. 732: "quae sibimet ipsa anima videtur inducere ex intentione circumstantiarum."



<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, Liber de Anima, *ibid.*: "ipsi proprie ecstasit et rationi ejus."

<sup>45</sup> A History of Psychology (London: Allen, 1912-21), 315.

<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, 225, ch. XLVII.

<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas, I, 86, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Curry, 211.

<sup>51</sup> "On Prophecy in Sleep," in On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath, 373.

<sup>52</sup> "De Somno et Vigilia," cap. III, 199f.

<sup>53</sup> "On Prophecy in Sleep," 373.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> "On Prophecy in Sleep," 377.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Gregory the Great, Dialogues. Trans. Odo John Zimmerman, in: The Fathers of the Church (New York: 1959), 262: The devil, says Gregory, is "clever enough to foretell many things that are true in order finally to capture the soul by but one falsehood."

<sup>58</sup> Epitome of Parva Naturalia, 53.

<sup>59</sup> Dialogues, 261. The Latin text reads: "Aliquando namque somnia ventris plenitudine vel inanitate, aliquando vero illusionem, aliquando cogitationem simul et illusionem, aliquando revelationem, aliquando autem cogitationem simul et revelationem generantur" (Opera Omnia, III, cap. XLVIII, col. 409).

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Dialogues, 262. Opera Omnia, III, cap. XLVIII, col. 412.

<sup>62</sup> Dialogues, 262.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Handlyng Synne. Ed. Frederick J. Furnivall. (EETS, no. 119). (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), 40lf., 15.





- <sup>64</sup>Robert Mannyng of Brunne, 379f., 14.
- <sup>65</sup>Robert Mannyng of Brunne, 389-400, 14f.
- <sup>66</sup>Robert Mannyng of Brunne, 388, 14.
- <sup>67</sup>Avicenna latinus: liber De anima, seu Sextus De naturalibus, IV-V. Ed. S. van Riet (Louvain: Editions orientalistes, 1968), 29.
- <sup>68</sup>Avicenna, 30.
- <sup>69</sup>Avicenna, 31.
- <sup>70</sup>ibid.
- <sup>71</sup>ibid.
- <sup>72</sup>Epitome of Parva Naturalia, 52.
- <sup>73</sup>Epitome of Parva Naturalia, 53.
- <sup>74</sup>St. Thomas, I, 86, 4.
- <sup>75</sup>Dialogues, 261.
- <sup>76</sup>Somnium, 255f.
- <sup>77</sup>Marcus Tullius Cicero, "Scipio's Dream," in Macrobius, Dream, 70.
- <sup>78</sup>Curry, 239. I do not wish to be unfair to Curry. He writes that the narrator presents this dream as a divine revelation, then adds: "But having ranked it so and in consequence having forfeited the privilege of using the psychology of the somnium animale, which has stood him in such good stead, he is forced to fall back upon frequent invocations to the gods to help him secure its being accepted as true." It would, I suppose, be possible to interpret that passage as meaning that this dream must be shown to be true because it is presented as a divine revelation; whereas, it would not be necessary to show a somnium animale as true. Curry's emphasis may lie with the first part of that interpretation, but the latter part is not consistent with Curry's general treatment of somnium animale. For Curry, the somnium animale is primarily important because of its psychological implications; but it is also important because it makes some claim to truth. As Curry sees it, some truth claim is essential. Thus he writes: "But as an artist he is quick to see that for the purpose of serving as a background for a dream-poem the somnium naturale is unsuitable because it is without significance"--not so then, the somnium animale.



<sup>79</sup>"Two Types of Dreams in The Elizabethan Drama, and Their Heritage: somnium animale and the Prick-of-Conscience," Studies in English Literature, (1967), 239-56.

<sup>80</sup>Presson, 249.

<sup>81</sup>Presson, 240.

<sup>82</sup>Presson, 240; Curry, 240.

<sup>83</sup>Curry, 239.

<sup>84</sup>Curry, 234.

<sup>85</sup>Curry, 240.

<sup>86</sup>Kittredge, 68-70.

<sup>87</sup>"Chaucer's Lady of the Daisies," JEGP, XXI (1922), 293-317.

<sup>88</sup>One of Freud's summaries of these factors may be found in Chapter VII, at the beginning of the section "Regression," in The Interpretation of Dreams (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 571: "Dreams are psychical acts of as much significance as any others; their motive force is in every instance a wish seeking fulfilment; the fact of their not being recognizable as wishes and their many peculiarities and absurdities are due to the influence of the psychical censorship to which they have been subjected during the process of their formation; apart from the necessity of evading this censorship, other factors which have contributed to their formation are a necessity for the condensation of their psychical material, a regard for the possibility of its being represented in sensory images and--though not invariably--a demand that the structure of the dream shall have a rational and intelligible exterior."

<sup>89</sup>Curry, 238.

<sup>90</sup>Curry, 240.

<sup>91</sup>Curry, 235.

<sup>92</sup>Curry, 236.

<sup>93</sup>Clemen, 25. Contrasting The Book of the Duchess with French love-visions, Clemen writes: "But Chaucer in his dream gives us neither definite instruction nor supernatural abstractions; instead we have an actual meeting between real people. The function of the dream, in other words, is altered; and the content of Chaucer's dream bears a resemblance to the dreams of real life."



- 94 Hieatt, 59f.
- 95 Freud, 311.
- 96 Freud, 313.
- 97 Frivolities, 81, ch. 16, 94.
- 98 Salisbury, Frivolities, 84, ch. 17, 97.
- 99 *ibid.*
- 100 Freud, 328.
- 101 Freud, 340f.
- 102 Freud, 340.
- 103 Salisbury, Frivolities, 81, ch. 16, 94.
- 104 Freud, 375.
- 105 Freud, 389ff.
- 106 Sypherd, 46.
- 107 Wimsatt, 125.
- 108 "Convention as Structure: The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," in: J. V. Cunningham, Tradition and Poetic Structure, (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1960), 68.
- 109 Newman, Somnium, 233-53.
- 110 Newman, Somnium, 254f.
- 111 Newman, Somnium, 263.
- 112 Newman, Somnium, 289-306.
- 113 Newman, Somnium, 306-17 *passim*
- 114 Newman, Somnium, 321f.
- 115 Newman, Somnium, 196.
- 116 Newman, Somnium, 100.
- 117 Newman, Somnium, 299.
- 118 *ibid.*
- 119 Newman, Somnium, 360.





<sup>120</sup>Cf. Huppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, 4;  
Dahlberg, "Macrobius and the Unity of the Roman de la Rose,"  
SP, 58 (1961), 573-82.

<sup>121</sup>Dahlberg, 574.

<sup>122</sup>Dahlberg, 575.

<sup>123</sup>Dahlberg, 576.

<sup>124</sup>ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Dahlberg, 576ff.

<sup>126</sup>Dahlberg, 577.

<sup>127</sup>ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Newman, Somnium, 252.

<sup>129</sup>Dahlberg, 577.

<sup>130</sup>ibid.

<sup>131</sup>ibid.

<sup>132</sup>Macrobius, Dream, 85.

<sup>133</sup>Le Roman de la Rose, I, 3-10.

<sup>134</sup>Macrobius, Dream, 84.

<sup>135</sup>ibid.

<sup>136</sup>ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Macrobius, Dream, 85.

<sup>138</sup>ibid.

<sup>139</sup>ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Macrobius, Dream, 85f.

<sup>141</sup>Bloomfield, 347.

<sup>142</sup>ibid.

<sup>143</sup>ibid. Bloomfield cites no sources, but the importance of the morning hours has a tradition of some weight. Charles Speroni cites a number of Greek, Latin and medieval references relating morning hours to prophecy as background for some dreams in Dante's Divine Comedy ("Dante's Prophetic Morning-Dreams," SP, 45 (1948), 50-59).



144 Bloomfield, 347.

145 *ibid.*

146 *ibid.*

147 *ibid.*

148 *ibid.*

149 John of Salisbury refers to the Homeric gates for true and false dreams by way of a comment on Vergil; cf. Frivolities, 75, ch. 14, 88.

150 Jeremiah, 29: 8-9; Job 20:8; Psalms 73:20; and others.

151 Le Dit de la Panthère d'Amours, ed. Henry A. Todd. (Paris: Didot, 1883), 2f., ll. 41-44.

152 in: Modern Philology, 8 (1910), 71, stanza 2.

153 "Le Fablel," 75, stanza 37.

154 "Le Fablel," 86, stanza 142.

155 Le Roman de la Rose, I, ll. 1f.

156 Le Roman de la Rose, I, ll. 28-30.

157 Piers Plowman, C, Passus X, 302f.

158 Piers Plowman, C, Passus X, 317.

159 William C. Dement, "Essay on Dreams," in New Directions in Psychology II (New York: Holt, 1965), 225, noting that in a dream we may be unaffected by events which would astonish us in waking life, remarks: "This seems to imply that, although the conscious quality of the dream experience is an intense sense of reality, at some other level of awareness we know that we are dreaming." Aristotle thinks similarly: "for often when a man is asleep he says somewhere in his soul that what appears to him is a dream" ("On Dreams," 462a, 363).

160 Le Roman de la Rose, IV, ll. 18415-424.

161 Le Roman de la Rose, IV, ll. 18309f.

162 Baake's discussion is on page 15; for Guy of Warwick I quote from: The Romance of Guy of Warwick. Ed. Julius Zupitza (EETS, extra series, XXV-XXVI). (London: Trübner, 1875-76).



163 Guy of Warwick, ll. 9084ff.

164 The poet writes:

Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space;  
My body on balke þer bod in sweuen,  
My goste is gon, in Godez grace,  
In auenture þer meruayles meuen.

(The Pearl, ed. Sister Mary Vincent Hillmann. New York: College of Saint Elizabeth Press, 1959, 6, ll. 61-64).

165

Si fu en un songe raviz  
Le plus merveilllos, ça m'est vis,  
Qu'oissiez onques mais parler,  
Qui a droit le voudroit conter.

("Le Songe Vert," Romania, 33 (1904), 506, ll. 221-224).

166 My attention was first called to these instances in the work by A. Leo Oppenheim who cites references in Kelchner's pages 87, 98, 108 and 124 for a means of establishing objectivity of the dream which differs from those he found in Greek writings ("The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 46 (1956), 188). As Kelchner (Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935) quotes the passages, two of them include what may be called subjective vocabulary--"hann dreymir" (86) and "Hann þottist" (124), while the others do not. In one case, the dreamer simply "sa" someone who appeared (98); in the other a woman "kom at honum" (108). In the first two cases, then, the expectation of imaginative apprehension is contradicted by the facts of the case.

167 John Milton, Paradise Lost, in his Complete Poems and Major Prose. Ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), 297, Book IV, 801-804.

168 La Chanson de Roland. Ed. F. Whitehead (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 74, CLXXXV, 2528-31.

### Footnotes to Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> Le Roman de la Rose, II, l. 39, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Machaut, "La Fonteinne Amoureuse," 244.

<sup>3</sup> Watriquet de Couvin, "Li Dis de l'Arbre Royal," in: Dits de Watriquet de Couvin. Ed. Aug. Scheler. (Bruxelles: 1868), lines 8-13, 83 and 538-40, 100.





- <sup>4</sup>Pearl, lines 19f.
- <sup>5</sup>Langland, C Passus I, 3.
- <sup>6</sup>Langland, B Passus XIX, l. 1, 550 and C Passus XXII, l. 1, 551.
- <sup>7</sup>Muscatine, 102.
- <sup>8</sup>Muscatine, 260, FN 9 cites Kittredge, Chaucer, 66-68.
- <sup>9</sup>Macrobius, 90.
- <sup>10</sup>Cicero, De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione. Trans. W. A. Falconer. (London: Heinemann, 1930), 271.
- <sup>11</sup>Muscatine, 102.
- <sup>12</sup>Erikson, "The Dream Specimen and Psychoanalysis." American Psychoanalytic Association Journal, 2 (1954), 18.
- <sup>13</sup>Malcolm, Dreaming (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 55.
- <sup>14</sup>Freud, "Secondary Revision," in his Interpretation of Dreams, 526-46.
- <sup>15</sup>Hieatt, 11.
- <sup>16</sup>Hieatt, 50ff.
- <sup>17</sup>Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 105: "All this bears little resemblance to our own dream-experience, and scholars have been inclined to dismiss it, like so much else in Homer, as 'poetic convention' or 'epic machinery'."
- <sup>18</sup>Dodds, 103f.
- <sup>19</sup>Dodds, 108.
- <sup>20</sup>For example, at one point, Hieatt explains, quite rightly, that "Blending fusion, and double-meaning . . ." amount to "much the same thing as Freud's 'condensation' and 'displacement' . . ." (66).
- <sup>21</sup>Hieatt, 90.
- <sup>22</sup>ibid.
- <sup>23</sup>Hieatt, 18.



<sup>24</sup>Hieatt, in her chapter "The Dream as a Vehicle for Allegory," 103-11.

<sup>25</sup>Burke, "Freud and the Analysis of Poetry," American Journal of Sociology, 45 (1939), 391-417.

<sup>26</sup>Dodds, 105.

<sup>27</sup>Spearing, ed. The Knight's Tale from The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 165, note to lines 525-34.

<sup>28</sup>Rohde, Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen (Freiburg und Leipzig, 1894), 7.

<sup>29</sup>Claudian, De Raptu Proserpinae, I, 78-121 (Claudian with an English trans., ed. Maurice Platnauer. Metamorphoses, Liber I, 671-75, 48f.

<sup>30</sup>Lowes, John L. "The Loveres Malady of Heroes," MP, 11 (1914), 491-546.

<sup>31</sup>Hieatt, 39.

<sup>32</sup>Gower, Complete Works, ed. G. C. Macauley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), II, lines 87-1612.

<sup>33</sup>See Robinson ed. Chaucer, 706, note to The Summoner's Prologue.

<sup>34</sup>Kurath and Kuhn, Middle English Dictionary.

<sup>35</sup>In his work, The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), William Stuart Messer agrees with a claim that for classical literature a waking vision may be shared, but that a dream "commonly" appears to an individual only (87). But the fact of sharing does not require that the experience be a waking one. Guillaume de Machaut (Oeuvres, III, 1554ff.) narrates a shared dream in La Fonteinne Amoureuse and defends its credibility by citing a precedence:

Mais ce n'est pas trop grant merveille  
D'avoir songie chose pareille  
A deus personnes seulement,  
Qu'il est vray qu' enciennement  
A Romme avoit cent cenatours,  
Nobles en meurs et en atours,  
Qui tous cent un songe songerent . . .

(2641-47).

(Hoepffner discusses literary sources in introductory notes, XXXVII).



<sup>36</sup>John S. P. Tatlock explains the Te Deum the friar says was sung (CT, VIII, 1866) as marking the vision as a miracle from God ("Notes on Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales," MLN, 29 (1914), 144). Curry discusses the relevance of the friar's claims to living in poverty and abstinence, 216f.

<sup>37</sup>Bethurum, ed. Chaucer: The Squire's Tale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 42, note to lines 371f.

<sup>38</sup>For speculation concerning the dream based on source and analog studies, see H. S. V. Jones, "Some Observations Upon the Squire's Tale," PMLA, 20, n.s. 13 (1905), 346-59, and Haldeen Braddy, "The Oriental Origin of Chaucer's Canacee-Falcon Episode," MLR, 31 (1936), 11-19.

<sup>39</sup>Robinson ed., Chaucer, 738, note to lines 772ff.

<sup>40</sup>Olin H. Moore, "Jaufré Rudel and The Lady of Dreams," PMLA, 29 (1914), 517-36.

<sup>41</sup>Robinson ed., Chaucer, 750, note to line 2727.

<sup>42</sup>Le Roman de la Rose, III, lines 6550-52.

<sup>43</sup>Hatton, "Chauntecleer and the Monk, Two False Knights," Papers on Language and Literature, 3 (1967), 37.

<sup>44</sup>Hatton, 38.

<sup>45</sup>Muscatine, 238.

<sup>46</sup>Curry, 227: "Against Pertelote's presentation of scientifically accurate facts and sound medical theory, Chauntecleer has nothing to oppose but his colossal conceit and a few stories gleaned from old authorities."

<sup>47</sup>Curry, 220.

<sup>48</sup>Curry, 229f.

<sup>49</sup>Curry, 222.

<sup>50</sup>Curry's point is that Chauntecleer mixes dream types through ignorance: "He is copious in detail and points with pedantic pride to the exact book and chapter where one of the stories may be found, but he has no way of determining whether such dreams--which belong to the type somnium animale--are to be considered more credible than the true revelations which he mentions later" (228f.).

<sup>51</sup>Curry, 230.





<sup>52</sup>Adams and Levy, "Good and Bad Fridays and May 3 in Chaucer," English Language Notes, 3 (1966), 245-48.

<sup>53</sup>In passing it may be noted that The Nun's Priest's Tale provides an excellent instance of dream verisimilitude outside a dream, if we follow Adams' and Levy's analysis. Beyond the allegory in general, I have in mind specifically the condensation entailed in the methodology of the time reference.

Whan that the month in which the world began,  
That highte Marche, whan God first maked man,  
Was compleet, and passed were also,  
Syn March bigan, thritty days and two . . . (CT, VII, 3187-90), brings together allusion to March as the time of Adam's fall, fusion with May 3, the time of Chauntecleer's fall, and reference to the year of Christ's death. See Adams' and Levy's discussion, 247.

<sup>54</sup>Allen, "The Ironie Fruyt: Chauntecleer as Figura," Studies in Philology, 66 (1969), 33.

<sup>55</sup>ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Elliott, ed., The Nun's Priest's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 10.

<sup>57</sup>Hieatt, 42.

<sup>58</sup>In Book VIII, "Of Divers Visions," (in The Dialogue on Miracles, London: Routledge, 1929, II) Ceasarius of Heisterbach tells of visions received by nuns and priests, some who were especially pious, some who were troubled by sins (1-100).

<sup>59</sup>Curry, 238.

<sup>60</sup>Hieatt, 38.

<sup>61</sup>ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Steiner, Der Traum in der Aeneis (Bern: Haupt, 1952), 46.

<sup>63</sup>The Filostrato has Troilus thinking over his encounter with Cressida, but he does not use a dream word. For guidance to correspondences, I have consulted Karl Young, The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde (London: Kegan Paul, 1908) and Sanford B. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1959) as well as William Michael Rosetti's notes in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde Compared with Boccaccio's Filostrato (London: Trübner, 1873). For the Filostrato text itself, I have used The Filostrato of



Giovanni Boccaccio, a Translation with Parallel Text. Ed. Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929).

<sup>64</sup>See references in FN 118 in Chapter I.

<sup>65</sup>Filostrato has no corresponding lines.

<sup>66</sup>Lines do not correspond in Filostrato, but Chaucer evidently drew on later lines in Boccaccio for elements of the dream.

<sup>67</sup>Owen, 26.

<sup>68</sup>Meech, 43.

<sup>69</sup>ibid.

<sup>70</sup>In corresponding lines in Filostrato Troilus speaks directly to Pandarus of the love torment. There is no reference to sleep.

<sup>71</sup>In Boccaccio, there is a similar though less detailed dream, but it is told by Troilus to Pandarus.

<sup>72</sup>Curry, 209.

<sup>73</sup>Averroes, Parva Naturalia, 50.

<sup>74</sup>Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 499.

<sup>75</sup>Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 94. Jordan comments only on Troilus' final dream: "At first his lament is based on the inpalpable proof of his dream of Criseyde and the boar, and then on the more palpable proof of Criseyde's letter, and finally the irrefutable evidence of the brooch he had given Criseyde, found on Diomedes's coat of arms seized in battle" (ibid.).

<sup>76</sup>Meech, 237.

<sup>77</sup>Meech, 128.

<sup>78</sup>Hieatt, 37.

<sup>79</sup>There is a dream in the corresponding lines Rossetti marks, but the relationship is complex and involves Criseyde's major dream as well. Meech explains: "In the original . . . the dream of the forsaken Troilo, the boar was anything but sleepy, crashing into view as it loudly did and then ripping out Criseida's heart with its tusks . . . . In fashioning



Criseyde's dream, Chaucer has transferred the tearing out of the lady's heart from the boar Diomede to the eagle Troilus . . ." (43f.).

<sup>80</sup>Meech, Design, 43.

<sup>81</sup>How seriously Gower and Aristotle should be taken respectively as spokesmen for attitudes of their ages, I do not know. But it is interesting to contrast Gower's view of common opinion with Aristotle's. Aristotle moves in the opposite direction in combating common opinion. "The fact that all, or at least many, suppose that dreams have a significance inclines one to believe . . .," he states ("On Prophecy in Sleep," I, 373) and he adds, "But the fact that one can see no reasonable cause why it should be so, makes one distrust it . . ." (ibid.).

<sup>82</sup>Gower, Vox Clamantis, in his Complete Works, IV, 20.

<sup>83</sup>Though Newman includes the first book of Corpus Hermeticum, called "The Poimandres (of Hermes Trismegistus)" in his list of works normative for such dream visions as Chaucer's, what impresses me about that work is its level of abstraction. The "Poimandres" is an intellectual experience in which the visionary is taught by "the Mind of the Sovereignty." The visionary sees a brief scene consisting of light and darkness, but there is next to no sense of imaginative experience. A brief excerpt will establish the point I mean. Told to think of the Light, the visionary bows his head for a moment under the gaze of Poimandres: "And when I raised my head again, I saw in my mind that the Light consisted of innumerable Powers, and had come to be an ordered world, but a world without bounds. This I perceived in thought, seeing it by reason of the word which Poimandres had spoken to me" (8a, 117), (Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings . . . Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Ed. Walter Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), I.

<sup>84</sup>Wimsatt, 124.

<sup>85</sup>French, "The Man in Black's Lyric," JEGP, 56 (1957), 234.

<sup>86</sup>Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened," PMLA, 67 (1952), 870.

<sup>87</sup>Dodds, 107f.

<sup>88</sup>de la Mare, Behold, this Dreamer! (New York: Knopf, 1939), 102.







<sup>89</sup>French, 234.

<sup>90</sup>Averroes, Parva Naturalia, 53, previously cited.

<sup>91</sup>Pearl, line 1184.

<sup>92</sup>Gower, Vox Clamantis, in his Works, IV, 20.

<sup>93</sup>For instance, Georgia Crampton declares that the knight as a projection of the dreamer "seems patent to the modern reader familiar with current lore about links between dreams and the subconscious," ("Transitions and Meaning in The Book of the Duchess," JEGP, 62 (1963), 487). From a quite different perspective, Huppé and Robertson say that "the Black Knight was not intended as the dream representative of John of Gaunt, but rather as a sorrowing alter ego of the speaker in the poem" (52).

<sup>94</sup>Friedman, 145. Also Samuel Schoenbaum has suggested that the poem aims at "a more generalized aggression of the grief felt upon the loss of a loved one than merely John of Gaunt's" ("Chaucer's Black Knight," MLN, 68 (1953), 121).

<sup>95</sup>Friedman, 146.

<sup>96</sup>Friedman, 157f.

<sup>97</sup>Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened," 872.

<sup>98</sup>Newman is among those who suggest Philosophy herself as the physician. (368). Newman, interestingly, traces a number of similarities between The Book of the Duchess and Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, (Somnium, 368-70).

<sup>99</sup>Bronson, "Book of the Duchess, Re-Opened," 871f.

<sup>100</sup>Friedman, 146.

<sup>101</sup>Severs, "Chaucer's Self-Portrait in The Book of the Duchess," PQ, 43 (1964), 38.

<sup>102</sup>Bronson, "Concerning 'Houres Twelve'." MLN, 68 (1953), 518.

<sup>103</sup>Crampton, 498.

<sup>104</sup>An important recent exposition of the general course of the poem is that of J. A. W. Bennett, Chaucer's Book of Fame (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

<sup>105</sup>Allen, "A Recurring Motif in Chaucer's House of Fame," JEGP, 55 (1956), 405.



<sup>106</sup>Baker, "Some Recent Interpretations of Chaucer's House of Fame," University of Mississippi Studies in English, 1 (1960), 98.

<sup>107</sup>Allen, 404.

<sup>108</sup>Clemen, 112.

<sup>109</sup>Delaney, "'Phantom' and The House of Fame," Chaucer Review, 2 (1967), 74.

<sup>110</sup>I am in doubt about Koonce's treatment of the symbolic implications of the poem's December 10 date (57-72). Koonce mixes a great number of authoritative references to establish a meaning for the date in keeping with his general finding of the dream as a prophetic vision. But his general procedure throughout his book depends on significances established outside Chaucer's poem, and thereby threatens to leave the poem behind. In any event, Koonce's proposal is one of the allegorical ones which, I feel, leave other areas of the dream as dream to be explored. D. M. Bevington associates the date with the eve of winter solstice (291 f.). "The Obtuse Narrator in Chaucer's House of Fame," Speculum, 36 (1961).

<sup>111</sup>Clemen, 117.

<sup>112</sup>*ibid.* Clemen cites lines 1254, 1216, 1353, 1389, 1516, 2119.

<sup>113</sup>Clemen, 120. (He cites lines 1179, 1255, 1282, 1329, 1341, 2055).

<sup>114</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>115</sup>"How he forswor hym ful falsly" (389); "And falsly gan hys terme pace" (392); "And when she wiste that he was fals" (393); "Eke lo! how fals and reccheles/ Was to Briseyda Achilles" (397f.) and so on.

<sup>116</sup>Roland M. Smith apparently first pointed out the obvious echo with The Romance of the Rose in "Chaucer's 'Castle in Spain'," MLN, 60 (1945), 39-40. Castles in Spain appear in the insomnium dream passage discussed in Chapter I.

<sup>117</sup>Hieatt, 75.

<sup>118</sup>Robinson, 778, and see Roger Miller Jones, "Posidonius and the Flight of the Mind Through the Universe," Classical Philology, 21 (1926), 97-113, for a discussion of the prevalence of the tradition of intellectual flights.

<sup>119</sup>Hieatt, 78.



<sup>120</sup>Ellis, The World of Dreams (London: Constable, 1926), 20.

<sup>121</sup>See FN 68 of this Chapter.

<sup>122</sup>Bevington, 294.

<sup>123</sup>Jung, Collected Works (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953-64), VII, 158.

<sup>124</sup>Augustine, De Genesi, Book XII, *passim*. Chaucer's allusion to St. Paul is in The House of Fame, 980-82.

<sup>125</sup>Curry, 239.

<sup>126</sup>Tatlock, "Chaucer's 'Elcanor'," MLN, 36 (1921), 97.

<sup>127</sup>Curry, 235.

<sup>128</sup>Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, 109.

<sup>129</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 53. That Bennett presumably takes "sweven" as a way of saying somnium was dealt with in Chapter I.

<sup>130</sup>Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened," 108.

<sup>131</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 63.

<sup>132</sup>He remarks that some elements of lines 127-40 "seem to imply that the dream is to repeat the pattern of the Proem . . ." so that, presumably, references to heaven and earth should appear. But other elements of the passages show contrasts ("green and lusty May" opposed to "Disdain and Daunger") which are limited to "the vocabulary of earthly love, and in especial of amour courtois" (65, Bennett).

<sup>133</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 66.

<sup>134</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 66f.

<sup>135</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 69.

<sup>136</sup>Bennett also considers obligations to dream psychology that Chaucer's contemporaries might have expected. What would it have meant, he wonders, if the dream in the poem had been thought of as like those Macrobius found unimportant. He comments: "if Chaucer's own dream (regarding it for the moment as 'real') could confidently have been so classified, it would not have been worth considering." He thinks that Chaucer "is careful not to committ himself in regard to the value of the dream as such . . ." (Bennett, Parlement, 54).





<sup>137</sup>Freud, The Complete Psychological Works (London: Hogarth Press, 1955-64), II, 337.

<sup>138</sup>Similar condensations occur outside the dream context, as with Chauntecleer and Pertelote in The Nun's Priest's Tale. That fact does not, of course, remove the coincidental appropriateness of a dream feature for this poem.

<sup>139</sup>Huppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, 108.

<sup>140</sup>Speaking of the narrator, Brewer says: "The account of the world given in the Dream of Scipio dissatisfies him; not because it is wrong but because it is incomplete" (The Parlement of Foules. London: Nelson, 1960, 18).

<sup>141</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 49.

<sup>142</sup>Huppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, 144.

<sup>143</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 185.

<sup>144</sup>Bennett, Parlement, 157.

<sup>145</sup>Baker, "The Poet of Love and the Parlement of Foules," University of Mississippi Studies in English, 2 (1962), 107.

<sup>146</sup>ibid.

<sup>147</sup>ibid. Baker does not attempt to establish the poet's refusal to be content with his dream by the text and seems to be thinking that Chaucer himself is left with a problem which the dreamer solved within the dream.

<sup>148</sup>Payne, 142.

<sup>149</sup>Tupper, 301.

<sup>150</sup>Tupper, 300.

<sup>151</sup>ibid.

<sup>152</sup>Payne, 97.

<sup>153</sup>Payne, 102.

<sup>154</sup>Payne, 93.

<sup>155</sup>Payne states: "The balade of the beautiful ladies actually reconciles, in the ideal world of the dream, what remain for the dreamer-poet apparently divisive ambiguities (100). Alceste herself, he finds, "combines the natural and the ideal with the traditional past," so that he may conclude:



"the ladies' recognition of Alceste is recognition of a possible identity of experience, vision, and books--an identity which Chaucer had troubled himself about continuously in his earlier poetry and which he chose to discuss at the opening of the Prologue" (101).

<sup>156</sup>Payne, 106.

<sup>157</sup>The word revelation is not Payne's, but that seems to be what he means. At one point, for instance, he comments that Chaucer's understanding of art is: "art is primarily a matter of adjustment, a reconciliation through language or tradition, experience, and ideal knowledge (often in the form of dreams and visions)," 104. Elsewhere he states that "vision may illuminate the relations among art, experience and truth, but adds: "Yet, as many critics have noted (particularly in The House of Fame and The Nun's Priest's Tale), Chaucer is aware of the uncertainty and possibility of error in interpreting dreams as he is in interpreting experience or literature," 89.

<sup>158</sup>Curry, 236.

<sup>159</sup>Higgs, 94.

<sup>160</sup>Griffith, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women," Manly Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 33.

<sup>161</sup>Gardner, "The Two Prologues to the Legend of Good Women," JEGP, 67 (1968), 611.

<sup>162</sup>Baum, "Chaucer's 'Glorious Legende'," MLN, 60 (1945), 377.

<sup>163</sup>Gardner, 609.

<sup>164</sup>Payne, 109.



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